EMPOWERING PARENTS TO BECOME SPIRITUAL LEADERS IN THE HOME TO RAISE CHILDREN OF FAITH AT GILMORE CHAPEL A.M.E. ZION CHURCH

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EMPOWERING PARENTS TO BECOME SPIRITUAL LEADERS IN THE HOME TO RAISE CHILDREN OF FAITH AT GILMORE CHAPEL AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL ZION CHURCH

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ABSTRACT

EMPOWERING PARENTS TO BECOME SPIRITUAL LEADERS
IN THE HOMETO RAISE CHILDREN OF FAITH AT
GILMORE CHAPEL A.M.E. ZION CHURCH

by

Tressala Hicklin-Alsbrooks

United Theological Seminary, 2013

J. Elvin Sadler, D.Min, Mentor

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This project empowered parents to become spiritual leaders in the home to raise children of faith at Gilmore Chapel Church. The major resources used for this project were the Holy Bible and parental participation. Parents were encouraged to lead their families in faith formation by establishing faith building exercises in the home. The research strategy employed in this study relied on qualitative analysis. The researcher used pre and post surveys, questionnaires, research, and interviews to acquire data to support this project. The goal was to empower parents to raise empowered children through faith and dedication to the mission of Jesus Christ.

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Many thanks to the many people who were involved in this project:

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6. To the Gilmore Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church Family who prayed for me, assisted me, supported me, and encouraged me through the project. I love you all and thank God for each of you daily.

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May God bless and keep you all. I am blessed to have you in my life.

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to:

My husband, daughter and son
Darick, Kristyn Nicole and Leonard Edward II

In loving memory of my mother and father
Rev. Eddie H. Hicklin, Jr. and Mrs. Frankie Louise Hicklin

THANKS BE TO GOD WHO HAS GIVEN US THE VICTORY THROUGH JESUS CHRIST!

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ABBREVIATIONS

NIV	New International Version
A.M.E. Zion	African Methodist Episcopal Zion
GMC	Gilmore Chapel Church
SCLC	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
ACMHR	Alabama Christian Movement for Civil Rights
PR	Pre-survey results
PS	Post-survey results
Pbs	Proverbs

INTRODUCTION

The premise of this doctoral project is to empower parents to become spiritual leaders in the home to raise children of faith. The Bible is full of scriptures admonishing parents to provide a solid biblical foundation for children through instruction, training, and godly living. In the book of Proverbs, King Solomon gives biblical parenting directives for his children, which serves as a training manual for parents today. In Proverbs 1:8 and Proverbs 22:6, Solomon instructs children to listen to godly teaching and encourages parents to lead their families by establishing biblical principles at home. He states, "Listen my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teachings[1]. Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray."[2]

These scriptural mandates involve every member in the home working collaboratively to ensure that faith is transferred through the sharing of God's Word. The resources used to accomplish this transfer should draw the children and parent's hearts to God. The author of this project believes that parental guidance and spiritual nurturing are essential to the faith formation process. Without this foundation from the home, children will be easily influenced by their environs and develop false ideologies that will render

[1]Pbs 1:8 (New International Version)

[2]Ibid. Rover 22:6.

negative results. The article *Biblical Parenting Advice from King Solomon* supports this view. It states,

> Kids enjoy learning about the life experiences of their parents and what the results of some of their life choices were, whether good or bad. Parents must not assume that their children will figure out the important lessons of life on their own which
>
> leaves a vacuum in the child's heart to be filled with all sorts of various ideals and philosophies. Kids are set up for failure if they aren't taught by their parents. Solomon taught his kids how to be successful according to Proverbs 1:3. "Their purpose is to teach people to live disciplined and successful lives, to help them do what is right, just and fair." All parents want their kids to succeed and it is up to them to teach them how.[3]

Empowered parents will be able to impact the lives of their children to make informed decision concerning the right and wrong way to live when they are no longer under their care. A solid biblical foundation established in the home is the key to this process.

CHURCH-PARENT COLLABORATION

Parents have been given the responsibility to raise children in the fear of the Lord. The church and the parents should work together to mold or shape the character, values, and beliefs of their children. Historically, parents have depended solely on the church to develop faith for the family through Sunday morning worship or Vacation Bible schools. Ryan Wolfe, Pastor of First Christian Church in Canton Ohio states, Today's parents have outsourced the spiritual development of their children. Many of them want to lead their children spiritually but they don't know how. So they hand off that responsibility to children's ministries and youth ministries at the church.[4] While these ministries are

[3]Biblical Inspirations.org. Biblical Parenting Advise from King Solomon 2009.

[4]Pat Springle, Equipping Parents to be Spiritual Champions in Their Homes, How Three Churches are Helping Parents Become Spiritual Leaders (Leadership Network. 2010.) 3.

important, they should not be the only avenue parents use to develop biblical standards for their children. In other words, shifting the responsibility does not release the parents from the responsibility.

The church assists with faith formation by providing useful ministries to equip the parents with the knowledge and confidence to lead their families in faith formation at home. The book *Think Orange: Imagine the Impact When Church and Family Collide*, by Reggie Joiner supports the union of church and parents in faith formation. It states,

> A family ministry should develop the process that drives how both the church and the home combine their efforts to influence the next generation. If we really believe that nothing is more important than someone's relationship with God, it makes sense to combine the influences of the home and the church. Family ministry should not be another program you add to your list of programs. It should be the filter you use to create and evaluate what you do to influence children and teenagers.[5]

Family ministries should be developed to strengthen and encourage the parents to lead from within and to share the Word of God at home in a way that fits the design and character of the family. Knowledge and understanding of God's Word for the parent and the child fosters a reliance, dependence or even trust in the promises that are revealed. The mandate for the parent is to simply, pass it on.

Teaching the Word of God is paramount in the faith formation process. Voddie Baucham, Jr. gives the reason why the Bible should be the major textbook in this process.

> First, the Bible is the very Word of God. In 2 Timothy 3:16 Paul writes: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness." The Bible is not just a good book—it's God's Book. In fact, the Bible is the plumb line against which we measure all other books. Second, the Bible is God's primary tool in preparing us for a life of

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[5]Reggie Joiner, *Think Orange: Imagine The Impact When Church and Family Collide,* (Chicago, IL.; David C. Cook, 2009) 24, 83.

> godliness and service. Third, the Bible is an agent by which God conforms us to the very image of Christ. Forth, The Bible is a change agent. Hebrew 4:12 reads, "For the word of God is living and active and sharper that any two-edge sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." You may not be able to change your son's heart, but the Word of God can. Try all you want, but you can't reach that sullen teenage daughter of yours the way the Bible can.[6]

The church has the responsibility to empower the parents with the necessary tools to continue faith-formation processes at home through active Christian Education ministries, workshops, trainings, worship experiences and Bible studies. It is to serve as a supporting agent by reinforcing biblical principles through corporate worship, prayer and fellowship. The church should motivate the parents to share what they experienced during these sessions at home so that faith will continue to flow between church, parent, and child.

The challenge of every pastor and ministry team is to create ministries of relevance for the internal and external church and the communities in which it serves. Kennon Callahan speaks to the challenge of faith formation crossing generational barriers. He states,

> "New understandings of doing ministry must be created with each new generation for the church's mission to move forward. When an older generation imposes its understanding on the new generation-however innocently-both groupings become dysfunctional. Each new generation must carve out an understating of ministry that matches with time.[7]

Because of the changing dynamics of families, it is crucial that the church remain open to change as the communities, families, nation, and mindsets change. Parenthood today is different from the past, therefore, the tools used previously to empower parents

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[6]Voodie Baucham, Jr., *Family Driven Faith: Doing What It Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters who Walk with God* (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2007) 99-100.

[7]Kennon L. Callahan, *Effective Church Leadership: Building On the Twelve Keys* (San Francisco, CA.: Jossey-Bass, 1997) 4.

may not have the same impact today. The church has the responsibility to nurture and equip parents and children thorough relevancy and practice. Spiritual formation involves continuity between the information shared at church and the atmosphere in the home. The researcher believes that empowered parents will find new and creative ways to share faith with their family members based on the biblical foundation nurtured by the ministries of the church.

Chapter Previews

Chapter One, "Ministry Focus," includes the researcher's story, the story of her call to ministry, and her current context. It also includes her perception of the crisis created due to the lack of faith-formation or faith sharing and the project that will provide solutions for this crisis.

Chapter Two, "The State of the Art in the Ministry Model," is a discussion of the supporting materials through books, articles, models and other literature that will validate the usefulness of this project.

Chapter Three, "Theoretical Foundations," offers the theological, biblical and historical foundations for this project through relationships between God and parents, parents and child, and church and family. This chapter explores the biblical foundations of this project, Deuteronomy 6:1-9 and Ephesians 6:1-4. Suzanna Wesley's theological concepts for raising children of faith through family devotion and the Word of God will also be shared in this chapter.

Chapter Four, "Methodology," provides the researcher's methodology and proposal for this ministry project. It explores how the outcomes of the project will be measured and analyzed.

Chapter Five, "Field Experience," documents the journey of this ministry project from start to finish. This chapter includes a brief description of each of the program participants. Finally, the researcher discusses how the project was executed, the impact it had on participants in the program, and the outcome of the project.

Chapter Six, "Reflection, Summary, and Conclusion," contains a summation of the entire process of implementing this project. It includes the author's reflections on what worked well, what did not work as well, and how the project can be adjusted for future use.

The researcher is confident that this project will encourage parents to be spiritual leaders in the home and develop activities and/or studies at home to facilitate faith development and that the church will embrace its role to assist with the transfer of the same.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Faith Statements

> Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.[1]

The book of Hebrews has been instrumental in the faith development of the researcher. The examples of faith listed in this book have given her hope and assurance that God's abiding presence was keeping her during times of testing. The determination to pursue dreams and goals was a mindset as she pushed forward against insurmountable odds to achieve in the midst of doubt, rejection, and ridicule. Faith, for the researcher, has produced perseverance which provided the strength needed to, like Jacob, hold on until the blessings of God was received. The following is an account of her faith development through trust and dependence on the Master of Faith, Jesus Christ.

Rev. Tressala Hicklin-Alsbrooks is blessed and highly favored. She was created to worship and serve God with all her heart, soul, and strength and to shepherd the flock of God. She is a leader full of confidence and compassion who gives constantly to fulfill the needs of the community in which she serves and delivers the Word of God with charisma and care under the power of the Holy Spirit. Tressala also realizes that she is an

[1]Hebrews 12:1-4.

imperfect being serving a perfect God and it is only through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, she is able to do mighty exploits on His behalf. Her biblical foundation and unrelenting faith have kept her heart and mind tuned to God during the dark days of her life.

The researcher has been called by God to lead and shepherd the flock despite her personal aches and pains. She is indeed the "suffering servant" providing care to the wounded in the midst of her wounds. William Willmon defines the pastoral role as a care giver in his book entitled, *Pastor; the Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry.* He states, certainly, the pastor is to care for people. But the pastor cares "in the name of Christ," which may give a different cast and set different goals for the pastor's care than for that of a secular therapist.[1] The researcher realizes that providing care to a hurting community in the midst of personal aches and pains requires commitment to the mission of Christ to make the needs of others a priority in the lives of the ministering agent. God's mission has been and still is the primary focus in which she shares the Word of God with others.

The researcher has been in the ministry field for ten years. Of the ten years she has served as a pastor for six years in the West Central North Carolina Conference of the A.M.E. Zion Church. She is an ordained elder serving in her second pastoral appointment for the past four years. She is a faith walker, Bible believing Christian who is transparent before her parishioners. Her aim is to pass faith on to the members of her congregation by precept and by example.

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[1]William H. Willimon, *The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*, (Nashville, TN; Abingdon Press, 2002) 59.

The Beginning of Faith

The true essence of the researcher's faith was birth out of a mother's love and study of the Holy Scriptures. The resolve of every problem from childhood to adulthood has pointed back to a solid biblical foundation in the Word of God and an infallible belief in Jesus Christ. The knowledge obtained during the formative years through teaching, listening, hearing, and living a life of faith has been the center of her being and has allowed her to remain dedicated to the call of ministry. A daughter of the parsonage of the A.M.E. Zion Church, she experienced ministry from her father's eyes and her mother's heart. She was raise with both mother and father in the home and was the only female, the youngest of three children.

Due to the itinerate ministry of the father, the family served several pastoral congregations during her childhood. There were people in every setting that assisted in her faith formation through Sunday school, Vacation Bible schools, Varick Christian Endeavor, and Buds of Promise. Her mother was active in many of these ministries. Through family studies and homework sessions, the researcher gained an appreciation for church and the Word of God. Her mother read stories to them at bedtime out of their favorite Bible story book until she was 14 years old. The favorite story for the researcher was *The Big Tall Man,* dealing with David and Goliath. Sharing the Word of God by the mother was the beginning of a continuous journey of faith and endurance for the researcher.

At the age of eighteen, the researcher accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of her life at a choir concert at Alabama State University. She restored the relationship with her father that had been strained because of hurt and disappointment and strengthened the

relationship with her mother. Three months later she left home to attend the University of Alabama in Birmingham. She continued to support her father in ministry by traveling home on weekends to sing in the choir and to teach the youth class in Sunday school. After two years, she returned home to help care for her mother who was ill. At the age of 22, she was baptized by her father at Oak Street A.M.E. Zion Church.

Despite the challenge, the researcher continued her thrust for education and her activities in church. At the age of 23, she married Leonard and two children were born to this union. Due to the itinerate ministry of her husband, they served several congregations over a 13 year span. The children, Kristyn Nicole and Leonard Edward II were nurtured spiritually through the sharing of God's Word. The researcher used videos, family study sessions, music and movies to accomplish this task. Like her mother, she was very active in the ministry of her husband and worked with the Christian Education Department in every charge to established Children's Church and children's ministries to provide a biblical foundation for that particular age group.

Faith In the Midst of Trials

In the early morning of May 18, 1998, the researcher had an encounter with God that changed her life, goals, and dreams. She heard the voice of the Lord calling her into ministry. Fear of the unknown caused the researcher to procrastinate with an answer. Four tough years later, she preached her trial sermon on December 12, 2002 at Mount Zion A.M.E. Zion Church, Montgomery, Alabama. The crowd was moderate but the experience was a blessing. The calling was great and the calamity that followed taught the researcher to have enduring faith through perseverance and prayer. Her marriage to

Leonard ended which caused financial devastation for the researcher and the children. They experienced negativity from family and friends and for the first time, she and the children were homeless and financially deprived. In her eyes, her ministry was failing as was her faith and trust in God.

Despite the hardships the researcher remained faithful to God and her home church. She also continued to read and study the Bible with her children. The researcher prayed and trusted God for their future. She decided to leave the A.M.E. Zion Church to join a small holiness church 40 miles away from home. God quickly sent her back to the A.M.E. Zion church with a promise that a way of escape would be provided. She joined Refuge Temple A.M.E. Zion church and two years later, God provided an open door.

At Refuge Temple, God began to reveal the divine will for her life. God reaffirmed her ministry and like Abraham, required that she move away from the familiar on the promise that God would simply provide. In 2005, the researcher and her children moved to Charlotte, North Carolina to attend Hood Theological Seminary and to continue her ministry. With no place to stay and only a promise, the family left Alabama on a 400 mile journey of faith. Two weeks after their arrival in North Carolina, God blessed the researcher with a three bedroom house, a job at a prominent bank in the City, and a dynamic church family that embraced and nurtured her ministry.

A New Beginning

The researcher and her children joined East Stonewall A.M.E. Zion Church under the leadership of Rev. Michael McLean. Healing began in the researcher's life through the church and her classes at Hood Seminary. There were a number of people who

impacted her life and embraced the ministry within. Rev. McLean empowered the researcher to study the Word of God for divine revelations and meaning and encouraged her to share her struggles with other under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Biblical parenting was the order of the day as she developed home study at least three times a week with her children and their friends.

In 2007, the researcher received her first pastoral appointment to Reeves Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church, Concord, North Carolina. Later that year, she was ordained a Deacon by Bishop George Washington Carver Walker, Sr. Two years later she was promoted to her current charge, Gilmore Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church also in Concord, North Carolina. Later that year, she received her Elder's order from Bishop Walker at Camp Dorothy Walls Conference and Retreat Center, Black Mountain, North Carolina. She believes that the success of her story and ministry comes from persistent faith, belief, and trust in God through all thing and in all things. Constant prayer and study of Bible provided a solid biblical foundation from the birth of her ministry until this present time.

Faith Maintained

> I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.[2]

Paul's statement to the church at Galatia has been the scripture of focus for the researcher in recent years. She has suffered many losses during her forty-six year existence on this earth but has remained faithful to God realizing fully that the life she now lives is not her own. Through the loss of her mother and grandmother over the past two years, the researcher has developed a deeper trust and appreciation for God and

[2]Galatians 2:20.

ministry. She realizes that she is indeed an earthen vessel made of clay that is sitting on the potter's wheel cracked, bruised, chiseled, and stained by trials, tribulations, test, tears, and turmoil. The researcher's expectancy is for God to make all things new as her "Heavenly Father" carefully turns the wheel molding, shaping, and smoothing out the rough places in her life and that the Master's Hands will continue to caress the sore places and mend the brokenness in her life.

God has given the researcher a second change at love. She married Darick Alsbrooks on November 20, 2011 at Gilmore Chapel Church. He and her daughter have been her biggest supporters in ministry. God has also blessed her to enjoy the senior years experience with her daughter who will be graduating from Northwest High School in June 2013. The highlight of her ministry and faith journey was realized on February 4, 2013, when her teenage daughter told her mother she wanted to be saved before going to college so she will be covered under the Blood of Jesus. On Sunday, February 10, 2013, this blessed event was realized in front of the Gilmore Chapel congregation per her daughter's request. Everyone in attendance flooded the altar to celebrate with the researcher and her daughter and to pray for her future as she prepares to leave home. This was truly an example of the researcher's doctoral project, empowered parent transferring faith at home and nurtured by the church.

The scripture that encourages the researcher today comes from the Apostle Paul. He states,

> And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.[3]

[3]Romans 8:28-30.

Things continue to work out for her good because of a stubborn faith and trust in God. God rewards those who constantly chase after the divine will for their lives. Because of the researcher's love for God and his people, her ministry has blossomed and has afforded many opportunities to preach and teach in various settings. This scripture has provided the assurance that God has indeed called her to serve this present age. Through constant prayer and faith, God will continue to stretch her boundaries and provided opportunities for ministry.

God has preserved, protected and provided elevation in ministry and in faith. The researcher believes that she owes God her life and her love knowing that the life she lives is for God's glory and it is through the divine calling of Christ, true faith has been revealed, maintained, sustained, and realized.

THE MINSTRY CONTEXT

The ministry context for this project is a 103 year-old church located in the heart of two communities infested with drugs, illiteracy, poverty, and unemployment. Gilmore Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church is a congregation of about 175 African-American members in the Sidestown-Shankletown communities of Concord, North Carolina. This church is one of the leading churches in the Concord District.

According to the historical records of the church, members of these communities walked several miles in the heat and inclement weather to Rock Hill A.M.E. Zion Church. Because of the growth of the communities, it was decided by a coalition of members to build a church of their own. Members begin to congregate in various homes

in the communities until a place of worship was established. In 1910, land was purchased from a local resident and a small wooden structure was built at the church's present site. Because of the continued growth of the communities, an elementary school was opened in one of the rooms of the church and later expanded to become the Shankletown Elementary School. This school later became a part of the Cabarrus County School System.

According to the historical records and statements made by senior members of the church, Gilmore Chapel partnered with the community to obtain money for community and church improvements. The members talked about the positive impact the church as a whole had on the communities through outreach ministries to include after-school and summer enrichment programs, tutorial and mentoring programs, food banks, senior citizens ministries, and transportation ministries for community voting. The church had a sense of family as the community rallied to meet the needs of the children as well as the adults. There was a sense of pride as the senior members reflected about the past and how they paid big offerings to support the church and the outreach ministries of the church.

When the researcher arrived at the present context in June of 2009, the church was fragmented, divided, fighting, and confused due to internal strife, lay and ministerial fallout, and economic hardships. Many members believed that the administrative boards of the church mismanaged finances and that past leadership took money from the church accounts for selfish reasons. While Gilmore had been helpful in building the external community and served as the center of educational enrichment for the Sidestown-Shankletown communities, it was notorious for destroying ministers and ministries. As a result, the church lost its positive influence and was struggling to survive.

The researcher noticed the different family structures in the church struggling to make ends meet because of limited education and employment opportunities, while others used their resources to fight leadership which destroyed the morale and spiritual atmosphere of the church. Single mothers struggled to raise children without the assistance of the fathers. Grandmothers struggled to raise grand-children while the parents were incarcerated or sold/used drugs. There were a few families with the mother and father present in the home struggling financially to provide for their children. The internal structure of the church was fragmented, segmented, and compartmentalized into clicks that did more harm than good. She also noticed the decline in community involvement which opened the door for drugs, alcohol, teenage pregnancy, poverty, and illiteracy.

In the four years as pastor, the researcher addressed several needs that were essential to the survival of the church. Lay and ministerial relationships needed to be rekindled based on trust and faith in God and one another. Forgiveness for past mistakes by leadership and members and a progression towards the future with a focus on spiritual growth and development for all ages was apparent and long overdue. Discipleship training, workshops for leadership, and a rebirth of the Christian Education arm of the church were all needed. Spiritual renewal and family faith building was a priority through powerful teaching, preaching and worship.

From the researcher's point of view, this project is essential to the parent/child relationship in her current context. Many of the parents are supportive in ministry but lack spiritual leadership in the home because of emotional, financial or personal struggles. This project is crucial to the survival of the family and the church as a whole

because the parents must be encouraged to lead their families in faith formation despite the environs in which they live. Equipping them with the knowledge to pass faith to their children will be vital to the success of this project. The challenge is to help the parents understand and accept their responsibility to their children and God.

Empowerment through Faith

Synergy between story and context is apparent when it comes to struggle and the family dynamic. The researcher's faith journey and the context are connected in several ways. Many of the mothers and grandmothers in the church are struggling to raise children without input from the parents. Despite the challenges of childhood and the misfortunes of adulthood, the researcher's mother served as the spiritual leader in the home. The effectiveness of the mother's success was realized in the life of the researcher many years later. The victims in both the story and the context were and still are the children. Without positive role models and spiritual leaders in the home, many of the children will not have the solid biblical foundation needed to shape their thoughts and beings into adulthood. The researcher believes that faith formation is not just the mission of the church. Faith formation begins in the home. Biblical parenting is a requirement for parents nurturing the faith that was already established from the beginning of time.

The life cycle from birth to adulthood is a process of trust and belief in someone or something. It is the baby that finds security and trust in the parents that provides love and support. It is the child that goes to sleep in the security of his or her bed knowing that mother and/or father are going to be there in the morning when they awake. It is the teenager that expects to see loving parents at graduations, sporting events and recitals. All of this has been established from the beginning of life through trust and belief. Since the

element of faith is already there, it is the parent's responsibility to redirect or move the faith focus from the individual to the spiritual by teaching the Word of God through prayer and going to church together to fellowship with people of the same faith and belief.

Voodie Baucham Jr, supports the views of the researcher in his book, *Family Driven Faith: Doing What it takes to Raise Sons and Daughter who Walk with God.* From the research and the context, there have been members to walk away from Christianity as a whole because of ineffective ministry and the lack of faith formation in the home and the church. He writes,

> Our children are falling away because we are asking the church to do what God designed the family to accomplish. Discipleship and multi-generational faithfulness begins and ends at home. At best, the church is to play a supporting role as it 'equips the saints for the work of ministry." [4]

A survey conducted by the Barna Group, a leading research organization whose focus is on the relationship of faith and culture, found that less than one percent of the young adult population in the United States has a biblical worldview. Even more startling, the data shows that less than one-half of one percent of Christians between the ages of 18-23 has a biblical worldview. The Barna Group defined those as having a biblical world view if they believe:

- That absolute moral truth exists,
- That the Bible is complete, inerrant,
- That Satan is a real being, not symbolic,
- That a person cannot earn their way into the kingdom of God through good works,
- That Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth, and
- That God is the supreme Creator of the heavens and the earth and reigns over the whole universe today.

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[4]Voodie Baucham, Jr., *Family Driven Faith: Doing What It Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters who Walk with God* (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2007) 9.

Additionally, two studies conducted by both the Barna Group and *USA Today*, found that nearly 75 percent of Christian young people leave the church after high school. One of the key reasons they do so is intellectual skepticism. This is a result of our youth not being taught the Bible in their homes or in the church.[5]

This data supports the need for faith formation in the home. While the church has the responsibility to foster Christian Education, the ultimate responsibility for teaching and instructing children remains with the parents. This responsibility is not to be feared but embraced and it is going to take leadership and knowledge in order for effective transfer to be successful. Youth and children's ministries are important to assist with the process, but should not be used in place of the process. It must begin in the home.

The researcher has taken several steps to build the ministry model for the church around the importance of family and the study of the Word of God. Along with four dance ministries, Christian Education programs, and Bible Studies, the men of the church have organized and have reached out to the boys in the church for mentoring through Boyz to Men Christian fellowship and basketball. The Christian Education has formed the Daughters of Imani fellowship for the females to teach etiquette, appropriate dress, and relationships. Many of the parents are active in these ministries.

After the introduction of this project, children from a single parent home in the church decided to feed the homeless for Christmas and to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with them while they were there. The church rallied like never before to support this effort. There were approximately 100 people in attendance at 3:00 p.m. on Christmas Day including members, seniors and homeless families. Many of the homeless cried after

[5]Got Questions Ministries, www.gotquestions.org 2002-2013.

receiving the love and support from these children and the church. This was an example of faith transfer at work between mother, church, and children. The potential for more acts of kindness is great and will come to surface when parents become spiritual leaders in the home.

Finally, the researcher believes that empowered parents will raise empowered children. Faith transfer from parent to child will begin when parents assume the responsibility of leadership in the home. The basis for this is found in the Word of God. The more a parent knows, the more empowered they will become to share what they know with their children. The researcher believes that if parents are intentional and the church provides support ministries for the parents and the children, the statistics will change and the mission of the church will continue to move in a positive direction. God's name will be glorified and the church will multiply through the acts of reaching, teaching, preaching, and meeting the need of God's people.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY MODEL

The purpose of this project was to develop a model to empower parents to become spiritual leaders in the home to raise children of faith within Gilmore Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. This project was based upon the hypothesis that parents are essential to the faith formation of their children which begins in the home. Empowered parents sharing the Word of God with their children through family study and devotion will shape their character, values, and beliefs. The positive implications of this transfer are that empowered parents raise empowered children who will not be ashamed to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with others. These children will embrace the mission of Christ and become assets to the churches in which they serve. The key to it all lies in the hands of the parents. Proverbs encourages parents to provide biblical instructions for their children. It states, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."[1] The more children know about God, the more they will appreciate the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

The researcher found a wealth of material for this project and has carefully selected resources that support the thesis of the project though books, articles, and models. For the sake of organization, the information provided will be divided into four subheadings,

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[1]Proverbs 1:7.

Empowerment and Parenting; the Holy Bible and Parenting; Models in Biblical Parenting; and Trends for Faith Formation and Biblical Parenting.

EMPOWERMENT AND PARENTING

In recent year, the term "empowerment" has become commonplace in many political, social-economic, racial and educational arenas of the world. It is difficult to define because it involves the sharing of power between the oppressed and the oppressor. It involves a mutual agreement to share resources in order to impact the lives of those directly and indirectly affected by social, political, and economical downfalls. Several disciplines have adopted this term as a part of their focus, such as community development, education, economics, civil rights, womanist, and the gay-lesbian communities, to improve undesired situations and to gain acceptance for ideals and standards that go against popular belief.

From the research gathered, the definition of empowerment evolves with goals or views that are in question. The desired outcome of the process is stated in the definition of the process. The researcher found two that coincide with the project focus. The first comes from the Connecticut People Empowering People Domestic Violence program outlined in an article published in the *Journal of Extension* entitled, "Empowerment: What is It?". It states.

> As a general definition, empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power (that is, the capacity to implement) in people, for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important.[1]

[1]Nannette Page and Cheryl Czuba, Empowerment: What is it? (*Journal of Extension*, October 1999).

This definition identifies empowerment as a process of gaining control over something in order to impact the total structure of the family and/or community. In order for biblical parenting to be effective, the parents must assess the needs at home in order to gain control over dangers, seen and unseen. Empowered parents set the standards on which the household will be governed to assist children with making sound decisions and to listen to the voice of reason.

This definition is applicable to the African-American empowerment movement which has worked tirelessly over the years for equality and to motivate people of color to become active in the process of change. Cheryl Sander's book, *Empowerment Ethics: A Path to African American Social Transformation,*[2] provides the answer needed for the context by dealing with the empowerment of people of color through history and believes that the process of empowerment not only involves action but a change of mindset and standards based on God and community. She writes.

> To be specific, empowerment ethics means the norms, principles, and ethos ascribed to individuals and groups engaged in the task of liberating others by empowering them to act. The formulation of an ethical code for the empowered can begin with the adoption of the Golden Rule, the principle of moral reciprocity and empathy taught by Christianity and other world religions."[3]

Empowerment for the researcher's African American congregation has to deal with history and Heaven. This congregation boasts of a proud history filled with community outreach and social reform. The ethics and standards used during the struggles of the past were defined by the leaders of the Civil Rights movements in which many of the

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[2]Cheryl J. Sanders, *Empowerment Ethics for a Liberated People: A Path to African American Social Transformation* (Minneapolis, MN.: Fortress, 1996).

[3]Ibid 4.

members participated and in many instances by the Bible. The statement by Cheryl Sanders draws empowerment back to the context with its center based on Jesus Christ. Equality, trust, and faith are intertwined in the empowerment process of Christians in this era. The biblical principles embraced in the past are applicable to the plight of biblical parenting today. Empowerment, in this sense, means to gain control over the spiritual atmosphere in the home to establish norms and principles based on the Bible to foster effective faith transfer between parent and child. Roberts gives the thrust of Christian empowerment through the works of Jesus Christ. He writes,

> Christ is the liberator and the Christian faith promises "deliverance to the captives". It promises to let the oppressed go free. It follows, then that any meaningful relationship between blacks and whites at this time will need to involve a give-and take-relationship of mutual cultural enrichments.[4]

Martin Luther King embraced this theology through the liberation movements in the 1950s and 1960s which impacted people of every race, gender, and nationality. Bargaining between the factions involved in any liberation movement will involve all sides coming together to create polices that will be beneficial for the total community of interest. Each side has to change so that the desired outcome will be achieved. This work involves participation and sacrifice. Parents and children will have to do the same in the faith formation process. The diversity in thought, generational difference, and technological focus of this genre will be a struggle if parents and children are not willing to give and take.

Empowered parents are the key to the success of this project. As stated before, history plays a major role in empowerment and often provides the catalyst for change in

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[4]J. Deotis Roberts,*Liberation and Reconciliation: A Black Theology*, (2nd Ed. Louisville, KY; Westminister John Knox, 2005) 11.

the present. Another major contributor to the empowerment of people comes through the salvation experience. The Holy Spirit is the moving force during the salvation process which is the beginning of the Christian experience. Jesus was empowered at the beginning of his ministry through the descending of the dove from heaven. The disciples were empowered to share the Word of God during the Pentecost experience. Christians are empowered through faith with the confession that Jesus is Lord.

The success of this project is contingent upon the parents desire to make a difference in the home. The qualities to ensure success in the homes are within through the salvation experience. Noel Jones writes,

> You were always His choice; you just did not realize it. Once He has decided, He gives you the opportunity to respond. He will allow you to drift away if you choose, and to go through some of the most trying of circumstances, in order to drive you back into His loving arms. He wanted you in an isolated position so that you would recognize that He has been trying to express His overwhelming love for you from the moment you were born. He is the one who set the whole thing up, not you! God get great glory from knowing that you can laugh at your past hardships when you realize that they are not comparable to what you are experiencing now or are soon going to experience.[5]

The researcher concurs with Noel Jones' assessment of the calling to parents to become leaders in the home. During the research phase of this project, the researcher provided several books for the group to read to empower them for the task at hand. Some of them are *Tapping the Power Within, A Path To Self-Empowerment for Women*[6], by IyanlaVanzant; *The Lego Principle*; *The Power of Connecting to God and One Another,*[7] by Joey Bonifacio; *Becoming Who You Are: Embracing the Power of Your Identity in*

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[5]Noel Jones.*God's Gonna Make You LAUGH; Understanding God's Timing For Your Life* (Shippensburg, PA.: Destiny 2005) 73.

[6]Iyanla Vanzant.*Tapping the Power Within: A Path To Self-Empowerment for Women* (New York, NY.: Smiley Books 2002).

[7]Joey Bonifacio, *The LEGO Principle: The Power of Connecting to God and One Another* (Lake Mary, FL.: Charisma 2012).

Christ[8], by Dutch Sheets; and *I Declare, 31 Promises to Speak Over Your Life,*[9] by Joel Osteen. These books share a commonality in thought which is to embrace the uniqueness inside and realize that God has called his followers to use what has been provided to make an impact on others.

Empowerment Model

In Moncrieff Cochran's article, "Parent Empowerment: Developing a Conceptual Framework", social scientists at Cornell University develop a process model of empowerment to measure the affect of parental involvement in the lives of children through community involvement, group meetings, and knowledge. This project brought together three diverse groups of people from different parts of the region. The first involved the Excuelita Alegre preschool in New Mexico nestled in a drug infested racially challenged community. According to the research, the school has survived by the presence of strong parental involvement through home visits, parent group involvement and parent group meetings. These parents did not ignore the external pressures of drugs and racial unrest but offered an alternative for their children through involvement.

Secondly, a professor in Southern California decided to bridge the gap between teachers and parents by providing necessary information to the parents that allowed them to have a tremendous impact on their schools. The professor was a part of the ethnic group for this study which allowed her to identify with the specific needs of the culture. The professor's willingness to get involved to bring together two opposing forces

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[8]Dutch Sheets. *Becoming Who You Are: Embracing the Power of Your Identity in Christ* (Minneapolis, MN.: Bethany House, 2007).

[9]Joel Osteen. *I Declare:31 Promises to Speak Over Your Life.*(New York, NY.: Hatchette, 2012).

produced a different and notable better outcome for the students of the schools as a whole. The knowledge that was transferred from the professor to the parents empowered them to get involved in the needs of the students. As a result, teachers and parents were able to co-exist in the same space to impact the lives of the children.

Thirdly, a group of professors introduced a parental involvement program to parents in a community with three year old children. During the group sessions parents were encouraged to interact with one another to set the agendas and to develop activities of interest to them for the betterment of the neighborhood. The researcher and the parents instituted activities for the three year olds that foster cognitive skills. After two years, the research found that the students were better prepared for school than those in higher grades that did not go through this process. The parents and the children were empowered through involvement and knowledge.

These empowerment examples had several things in common. First, they all involved a process that has certain characteristics, e.g. a parent organization guiding policy and providing a support group. Reflective observation by a trained evaluator was necessary to monitor the progress of the project and to gather new information to be used in the future. The parent organization negotiated changes in school and home visits and neighborhood cluster meetings allowed the parents to reflected on their own worth, discussed problems, considered alternatives, and take various kinds of actions to arrive at a desired outcome. There was also mutual respect between the empowered parents and the educational professionals or project leaders. As a result, power was shared between all the groups involved.[10]

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[10]Moncrieff Cochran, *Parent Empowerment: Developing a Conceptual Framework* (Family Science Review, Vol 5, No 1 & 2, Feb and May 1992 p. 5)

Analysis of both theory and practice has led us to conclude that issues of power are central to the resource distribution, and therefore to family support. Power is expressed in subtle as well as in overt ways, as messages from the dominant culture shape what people want and the ways that people think about issues. Our experience and that of others indicates that people without power have as much capacity as the powerful to assess their own needs; they simply have much less opportunity to exercise that capacity. A central premise of all empowerment models is that those very people, who are disadvantaged by the way that society is currently structured must play the primary role in developing the strategies by which they gain increased control over valued resources, if they are to be able to develop the self-confidence and the skills to accept responsibility for their own growth and the healthy development of their children.[11]

The Cornell Model of Empowerment confirms the need for parental involvement in the empowerment process of their children. The themes of caring and sharing are consistent as the participants worked together to improve the outcome for everyone involved. Participation by the parents made a difference in the attitude and actions of the children. Positive self-esteem, control over life circumstances, a sense of belonging and self identification were just a few of the attributes that manifested during the research process.

The researcher agrees with the dynamics of the Cornell model of process empowerment. The inclusion of parents in school and community dynamics produced results that would benefit all the parties involved. Power sharing and mutual exchange encouraged both groups to work together for the good of the whole. The parents in this

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[11]Ibid 6.

model were empowered through knowledge and opportunity to make a difference for the children. All of the scenarios presented in this research evolved over a process of time. The parents and the researchers were dedicated to the task in order for the changes to occur as indicated in the research. This approach is identical with biblical parenting. It is process that runs throughout the course of a child's life. Commitment and dedication to the task will yield a positive outcome.

Even though the researcher supported the Cornell Model, there were a few issues of concern. While empowerment involved mutual exchange for a desired outcome for all parties involved, the challenge in this process was to ensure that the oppressed or disadvantaged did not become more powerful than the original power holder. In the first example at the Escuelita Alegre School, the parents were empowered to get involved to counteract the negative forces of their environs. According to the research the staff worked with the parents in the beginning to establish support systems in the school. At the end of the process, the parents were powerful and the staff appeared to be losing momentum. The article states,

> By the end of the school year, in parent meetings staff asked the parents for permission to speak. Parents have developed their own agendas, and initiates and carried out their own tasks. They create and circulate the project newsletter, and assume the critical structures of power, influences and finance that are essential factors in getting anything accomplished in this modern world.[12]

The balance of power shifted between the parents and the staff. The research does not say how the staff felt about the changes that were taking place nor does it indicate that the parents worked together with the staff once the empowerment process evolved. The desired outcome was achieved but the equality of power shifted which changed the

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[12]Ibid 4.

dynamics of the research. In order for both groups to benefit from the research, power has to be shared and flow freely between the parties involved. It is a give-and-take dynamic for both sides.

Another concern for the researcher was the absence of the African American perspective. There were two schools targeting what appears to be similar racial dynamics. While the article speaks favorable of diversity, research for this minority group that makes up a large population in the American mainstream was ignored. The articles states,

> Diversity (race, class, gender, family form, age, sexual preference) is positively valued. We are convinced that an understanding of a given culture, including the traditions associated with role allocations inside the family, is indispensable to the determination of appropriate strategies for reducing inequalities, in order to avoid creating unnecessary resistance from family members who might feel threatened by change (husband/father for example).[13]

Talking about diversity and doing the research on diverse groups are contradictory to the study. The researcher of this doctoral project believes that the model would be applicable to a larger audience if the study groups were more diverse. For her research, the African American dynamic would have been very profitable to her project. It is easy to look at group dynamics that are similar. The challenge comes when the scientist targets groups that are historically oppressed and disadvantaged to think outside of their box and rise above their environs and societal expectations.

The Holy Bible and Biblical Parenting

Biblical parenting requires parents to have a thorough knowledge of the Word of God. God instructed the parents to do more than just provide for basic needs of children

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[13]Ibid 6.

but to also teach and train children by precept and by example. They are to take the lead in faith formation in the home with the assistance of the church and the community. Tom McGrath states,

> Faith is a relationship of love with our God, played out across the days of our lives. It is supported by the disciplines and practices of the Christian tradition that we make our own. So to raise your kids with a living faith, you must be immersed in a living faith. This doesn't mean you have to be perfect. It only means that you are in relationship with God. The reality of that primary relationship will filter into all your relationships.[14]

The researcher believes that teaching Word of God to children builds the foundational structure for a productive life. Biblical parenting requires consistency between both parent and child. The parent trains and the child receive and process what is taught to build Christian character. Therefore, faith formation is deliberate. When parents fail to institute these activities in the lives of their children, ineffective parenting is the result leading to failure. Proverbs warns against ineffective parenting. It states, do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol.[15] Solomon encourages parents to teach their children to live in the fear of the Lord and to use appropriate discipline to turn their hearts in the right directions when the go astray.

There are several sources available concerning faith and the family. One of the most important empowerment tools readily available for parents is the Word of God as discussed previously. This book tells the beginning of faith and the challenge for parents is to understand the material so that effective faith sharing can be accomplished. These

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[14] Tom McGrath. *Raising Faith-Filled Kids; Ordinary Opportunities to Nurture Spirituality at Home.* (Chicago, IL,; Loyola Press, 2000) 13.

[15]Proverbs 23:13-14.

activities have to be organized in order for the parent to lead the family. In the researcher's present context, the main avenue available for sharing the Word of God is through the preaching moment and Bible Study.

The researcher believes that in order for parents to be actively involved in biblical parenting, they must have a thorough knowledge of the Word of God, and a relationship with the Word. Faith is active, relational and transferable. Faith comes alive with the acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of one's life. Many parents feel as if they cannot live up to the expectation of spiritual leaders because they underestimate their ability to influence the lives of their children. Faith does not only come by what is said but by what is seen. The atmosphere at home and the environment in which a family dwells has just as much impact on faith transfer and formation as the spoken Word. Tom McGrath continues,

> You do not pass on a living faith like a quarterback handing off a football to a running back. And parents don't create faith. Faith comes from God and God has placed the seed of faith in each child. It's a longing for connection to deep and profound truth that is planted within each one of them. Parents have a major influential role in how prepared the child is and how well the faith is nurtured. But we don't create faith, possess faith, or control it. Faith is a relationship like the relationship between a vine and its branches. Faith flows. Our main task is to encourage the flow and not block it.[16]

Flowing of faith from parent to child has its roots in the Bible. This movement is constant which means that it is a process that will run the life span of both factions involved. Parents do not have to be perfect, just prepared through the study of God's Word.

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[16]Tom McGrath, *Raising Faith-Filled Kid: Ordinary Opportunities to Nurture Spirituality at Home* (Chicago, IL.: Loyola, 2000) 4.

Another primary resource the researcher used to support biblical parenting is a simple book written by Lori Widenberg and Becky Danielsons entitled, *Empowered Parents; How to Put Faith First.*[17] The researcher loved this book because of its structure and the materials included for study. Because of the diversity of the focal group for this project in educational and spiritual development, the researcher felt that the members would be able to connect with the contents of this book in a practical way. The transparency of both authors allowed the members to identify with their personal challenges and struggles and to find solutions to unanswered questions. The authors of this book are working moms trying to transfer faith while balancing church, parental, spousal and personal obligations. The premise of this book is to empower parents to lead their family in faith formation through godly living, biblical principles, and common sense. The author writes,

> Modeling spiritual growth to our children is important, too. Spiritual growth comes in four forms: prayer, worship, the Word and Christian fellowship. Families, who pray, read the Bible and attend church together build strong bonds with each other. While spending time with people who exemplify Christian values, children will have a host of positive role models.[18]

Leading by example is a key component to faith formation for the family. Children will mimic what they see often times before what they hear. Christian fellowship at home and at church will allow children to form friendships with other children that share similar beliefs. The success of spiritual modeling comes from the relationship within. The authors confirm this belief which means that parents must have an understanding of

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[17]Lori Widenberg and Becky Danielson, *Empowered Parents: Putting Faith First,* (Gainsville, FL.: Synergy, 2003).

[18]Ibid xv.

God's Word while applying these principles to the family setting. According to the authors of this book, faith sharing must be intentional with a definite focus in mind. A mission statement should be shared with the family so that each family member will know what is to be accomplished and the meaning behind the study sessions.

The authors agree that empowerment comes when the families are unified in purpose, forgive pass mistakes, learn to listen and follow the rules that are established, pray for wisdom and spiritual discernment, and cling to the hope that comes with faith in Jesus Christ. The twelve characteristics and study guide will assist the parents with how to develop study sessions for their children and to provide focus for the family. Again, parents are the agents in the home to lead the family towards the goals mentioned in this book. This book will be used extensively for this project. There are many other sources that support the thesis of this project. Because faith is a flow from within outward to the environs impacting everyone, the best way to impact a child's faith is to do what is natural and right.

The researcher agrees with Tim McGrath, the author of *Raising Faith-Filled Kids: Ordinary Opportunities to Nurture Spirituality at Home* puts it best:

> Our children learn about God when they receive tender care when they're sick. They learn about God's love when they see delight for themselves in our eyes. They get a taste of God's prodigious generosity when they wake up to find gifts from Santa under the Christmas tree. They're prepared to trust in the constancy of God when we are reliably there for them. They learn about God's wisdom when we show prudence in determining boundaries for their actions."[19]

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[19] Tom McGrath, *Raising Faith-Filled Kids: Ordinary Opportunities to Nurture Spirituality at Home* (Chicago, IL.: Loyola, 2000) 69.

Love is the element that flows through faith between parent and child. The natural care of a child is a part of the trust, dependency and assurance a child develops from the natural responses of a parent. In the book entitled, *Family Driven Faith: Doing What it Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk With God,*[20] Voddie Baucham, Jr, continues the thought of McGrath and believes that successful faith transfer between parent and child comes through responsibility, dedication, commitment, and consistency. The transparency in his writing helps the readers identify with the struggles of faith transfer issues and failures and addresses the fact that many parents fear this responsibility due to lack of knowledge. Regardless of the irrelevance, inadequacies and the inferior taunting of the mind, this challenge has to be embraced by the teaching agents in the home. The Bible is the basis for his work but encourages parents to use supporting materials to assist with family building exercises such as Bible Study outlines, faith building and sharing activities, as well as arts and craft projects to help the family focus on the mission at hand.

In the Book of Deuteronomy chapter 6, Voddie provided the biblical foundation for teaching children. Moses gives the charge to the Israelites to teach their children the history so that they will never forget who they are and where they came from. God navigated the Israelites through the wilderness, across enemy territory, and to the threshold of the promise given to Abraham. This knowledge was essential to their survival and faith formation for the future generations to follow.

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[20]Voodie Baucham, Jr., *Family Driven Faith: Doing What It Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters who Walk with God* (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2007).

> Moses saw the home as the principal delivery system for the transmittal of God's truth from generation to generation. There is no hint here-or anywhere else in the Bible-of the multigenerational teaching of the truths of God being abdicated by parents in favor of "trained professionals." That is not to say that parents should reject any help. If I believed that, I wouldn't have written this book. However, we must be careful not to shift the responsibility for our children's biblical training onto anyone else.[21]

The researcher agrees with both McGrath and Baucham that parents have to do what God requires them to do while developing structures in the home that will display biblical principles. More will be said about Moses but the underlying theme of his previous statement is to support the thesis of this project by encouraging parents to take leadership for raising faith filled children.

Another source that identified with the researcher's view is a book written by Adam and Karie Stradtmiller entitled, *Give Your Kids the Keys: Navigating Your Child to a Personnel and Sustainable Faith.*[22]These authors deal with faith transfer between parent and child through the process of driving. He gives a view of biblical parenting that cautions parents to reject the brake petal approach of parenting. This type of parenting tells the children what to stay away from or what not to do but does not provide an alternative. According to the Stadtmillers, parents should engage in gas petal parenting which deals not only with the dangers but also teaches children how to get ahead to be what God has called them to be in the midst of the dangers.

> Brake petal parenting is parenting by defense. Brake-petal parenting is based in fear. It is the fear that your kid will hear or experience something that will rob him or her of innocence. Brake-petal parenting is more about protection than

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[21]Ibid 91.

[22] Adam and Karie Stradtmiller, *Give Your Kids the Keys, Navigating Your Child to a Personnel and Sustainable Faith* (Ventura, CA.: Rega, 2010).

> engagement. It is a parenting style that keeps your kids in the backseat as you drive them around like a tour guide. It is a parent-child model that rarely lets children get behind the wheel to experience the thrill of driving themselves.[23]

The researcher liked this book because it dealt with movement. According to the researcher, there will be many instances in life that will cause a child to stand still or stop. This book cautions parents to stay away from past dwelling tactics and to continue the flow of faith through encouragement and continuous sharing of the Word of God. Parents have to help children see beyond current situations and move forward to achieve desired dreams and goals.

The researcher has always enjoyed the resources on family and prayer by Dr. James Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family. He has dedicated his life to family with a special focus on parenting. In the book, *Building Confidence in Your Child*,[24] Dr. Dobson deals with the role of parents as the empowering agent that is the constant voice of encouragement through the inferiority complex and low self-esteem phase of childhood. Parents are needed and the actions they display to their children will have an effect on their psyche either positive or negative. Parents have their own struggles that should not be passed on to the child. Parents need a confidant that will offer prayer, hope and genuine concern. Once the issues have been resolved or are addressed, parents are able to provide the support needed for the child. The researcher agrees that the confident parent recognized their limitations and moved to do something about it not for personal gain but for the benefit of the family.

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[23]Ibid 20.

[24]James Dobson, *Building Confidence in Your Child* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker, 2010).

Because of the distinct nature of boys and girls, parenting in general can be challenging. From the research conducted by the researcher, there are several resources available to assist the parent with raising children of faith that provides insight on the distinct natures of girls and boys. The Bible encourages the sons to listen to instruction and grow in wisdom and the daughters to grow in virtue and character. The ministry context in study has several family structures that include blended families, parents with adult children at home, and one-parent in the home.

The researcher used books by Susie Shellenberger, *Raising a Spiritually Strong Daughter: Guiding Her Towards a Faith that Lasts*[25] and Dave Meurer's book, *Boys will be Joys*[26], along with her personal experience of raising a boy and girl as a single parent to enlighten other single parents in the context. Both authors and the researcher agree that the most important relationship that children will have in life is the relationship with the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Regardless of the sex of the child, each needs to be led to this relationship through the power of the Holy Spirit and biblical parenting. Nurturing begins at birth with appropriate songs and stories that will point children in the direction of Jesus Christ. Both authors realize the importance of keeping God at the forefront of the parent/child relationship but are keenly aware that the natures of boys and girls are distinctly different. Despite the differences, both can be led to Christ through the sharing of the Word of God through creativity and constant Christian fellowship.

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[25]Susie Shellenberger, *Raising a Spiritually Strong Daughter: Guiding Her Toward a Faith That Lasts* (Minneapolis, MN.: Bethany House, 2009).

[26]Dave Meurer, *Boys Will Be Joys* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker, 2011).

The researcher was able to gleam from several books dealing with biblical parenting for current family structures in the context. Ron Deal's, *The Smart Stepdad: Steps to Help You Succeed!,*[27] empowers stepfathers to raise children of faith from the third parent perspective. The challenge for the stepfather and stepmother is to remain a positive role model for the child and to present a unified front with the wife or husband in front of the children during times of decision making and change. This lifestyle is an adjustment for everyone involved, including the biological parent not present in the home. Children tend to be loyal to biological parents and will do what they can to please that parent even at the expense of the stepfather. The author of the book and the researcher believe that the stepfather can be instrumental in raising God-centered stepchildren of faith through an understanding, unity, and loyalty to God and the biological parent in the home.

Allison Bottke's book, *Setting Boundaries with Adult Children: Six Steps to Hope and Healing for Struggling Parents*[28], gives a six step approach for dealing with adult children present in the home for several reasons such as deception, broken promises and marriages, and failed ventures. The acronym SANITY is used to give powerful points to parents and encourage their children to move forward, start over following God's plan for their lives.

S = Stop enabling, stop blaming yourself, and stop the flow of money

A = Assemble a support group

[27]Ron L. Deal, *The Smart Stepdad: Steps to Help You Succeed!*, (Minneapolis, MN.: Bethany, 2011).

[28]Allison Bottke, *Setting Boundaries with Your Adult Children: Six Steps to Hope and Healing for Struggling Parents* (Eugene OR.: Harvest House, 2008).

N = Nip excuses in the bud

I = Implement rules and boundaries

T = Trust your instincts

Y = Yield everything to God[29]

Biblical parenting for single parents is one of the biggest areas of focus for Gilmore Chapel Church. Eighty percent of the family structures in the church involve single-parent homes. There are numerous book and resources available to deal with this issue. In the book *Successful Single Parenting: Bringing Out the Best in Your Kids*[30] by Gary Richmond, and *Keys to Single Parenting*[31] by Carl E Pickhardt, the single parent dilemma was addressed and parenting tips offered to raise successful children in the midst of economic, social and emotional struggles. According to the authors, successful single parenting means that the family has to adjust to change and let go of the past. This task is often difficult for children because their desire is to have the missing parent back into the home. Self-pity and guilt along with the fear of the unknown seems harder for children to deal with and in many instances require professional help.

Single parents have to remain realistic about the life style adjustment. The children have to be able to see stability in the parent in the home in order to trust and believe that their future is secure. Gary Richmond reminds single parents that there is help available through the love of Jesus Christ and the comfort of the Holy Ghost. He writes, "God is a Father to the fatherless. Women, remember Hagar. God is also a Husband to the

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[29] Ibid Cover.

[30]Gary Richmond, *Successful Single Parenting: Bringing Out the Best in Your Kids* (Eugene, OR.: Harvest House, 1992).

[31]Carl E. Pickhardt, *Keys to Single Parenting* (Hauppauge, NY.: Barron 1991).

husbandless, so you are not alone. Men, the Word of God promises that He will be your sufficiency and your portion. You have not been abandoned, either."[32]

Along with the biblical parenting books, the researcher also provided the participants with several devotionals and hands on activities to assist with the development of family studies. *Praying the Scriptures for Your Children*,[33] by Jodie Berndt, Home Builder Series workbook, *Raising Children of Faith*,[34] by Dennis and Barbara Rainey, *and Simple Hands-On Activities Nurturing Spirituality in Children*,[35] by Peggy Joy Jenkins serve as guides on how to faith share with children of all ages. Parents should allow the children to select some of the activities for the families and to plan to share at least once or twice a week in a faith formation exercise.

I Think I Can!

It is the hope of the researcher that at the conclusion of this project, parents will see the value of leading their families in faith formation activities and accept the responsibility using the power and authority given to them by the Holy Spirit. Leadership is the key to this process. Patricia Brown wrote a book entitled, *Learning to Lead from Your Spiritual Center*, which addresses some of the woes of leadership. She writes,

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[32]Ibid (Richmond) 67.

[33]Jodie Berndt, *Praying the Scriptures for your Children*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan, 2001).

[34]Dennis and Barbara Rainey, *Raising Children of Faith*, (Little Rock, AR.: Group Publishing Company, 2001).

[35]Peggy Joy Jenkins, *Nurturing Spirituality in Children* (New York, NY: Hillsboro, OR.: Atiria and Beyond Words, 2008).

> It is hard for me to believe that my leadership is important. It may be hard for any of us to believe that what we are doing as leaders in this time is central to leading people home. We feel we cannot lead. It has been difficult for me to believe that who I am and what I have to offer through my presence are not just peripheral, tangential, and unimportant. Excellent leadership, we feel, is for others to give but not for us. The rest of us simply stumble along as best we can. On the contrary, who we are and what we offer are central to fulfilling our leadership task.[36]

Biblical parenting requires parents to take the lead with spiritual development in the home and embrace this challenge, realizing that what they have to offer is essential and necessary for the family. Leadership comes when parents realize their potential and understand that God has chosen them for this task just like they are, with what they have to offer. Acceptance of the task and a willingness to gain the knowledge necessary to complete the task is essential to the success of this task. Patricia Brown believes that leadership comes from the inside out. She states,

> As we move and search inward, we will meet the terror and violence that lie within us. We will project this same terror out upon the institutions and people we serve unless we face it, unless we allow God to transform us at the deep level. It is there that we can meet the God who is light at the point of our own darkness.[37]

Salvation is an inward change that manifests itself on the outside in several ways. Like Patricia Brown, the researcher believes that transformation of the inner being is the center of leadership. This change empowers one to carry the message of Christ uniquely to those who need to hear it. For parents, it is in the home.

Another resource that supports faith as an evolving agent of change through commitment of time, talent and resources, is a book by J. Elsworth Kalas entitled, *Faith*

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[36]Patricia Brown, *Lead from Your Spiritual Center* (Nashville, TN.: Abingdon Press, 1996) 14.

[37]Ibid 21.

from the Back Side[38]. The author admits that to pass faith from one generation to the next can be difficult, but it is doable. He believes that if faith is not alive or made anew in every generation, it will lose its distinguishing characteristics from one generation to the next. He uses the patriarchs of the faith to deal with this concept. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had an encounter with God, a defining moment so to speak, that made their faith come alive and anew within their own lives. According to Eslworth, "The crucial secret is for each generation to realize that it is their primary business to make their faith a living, appealing thing to their families and to the generation that follows. It seems that this should be easy: faith is such a grand, sustaining, achieving virtue that surely every generation would want it. But of course faith also comes with a price, a sell-everything-to-get-it kind of price, so other family members have to be willing to pay the price. Besides faith is intangible, which always makes it a hard sell until people sense its reality."[39]

There are other sources the researcher used to empower parents to accept the role of leadership. The books, *Faith Care, Ministering to All God's People Through The Ages of Life*,[40] by Daniel O. Aleshire, *Practicing Our Faith*[41], by Dorothy Bass and *A Deeper*

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[38]Kalas, J. Ellsworth. *Faith From the Back Side.* (Nashville, TN.: Abingdon Press), 2011. 51.

[39]Ibid 51.

[40]Daniel O Aleshire, *Faith Care: Ministering To All God's People Through the Ages of Life* (Philadelphia, PA,: Westminster, 1988).

[41]Dorothy Bass, *Practicing Our Faith :A Way of Life for Searching People* (San Francisco, CA,: Josey Bass, 2009).

Faith: A Journey into Spirituality[42] by Jeff Golliher, all deal with the importance of faith and how this attribute shapes the actions and beliefs of all from childhood to adulthood.

Models of Biblical Parenting

There are several models to encourage parents to accept the leadership role in the home. Douglas J. Schoelles of the Evangelical Lutheran Church formulated a model called *Equipping parents to be spiritual leaders in the home*[43]. The purpose of this project was to affect a positive cognitive, effective, and behavioral response in parents from two Evangelical Lutheran Churches in America congregations to lead their households in spiritual discipline.[44] This project involved four Sunday sermons preached on the topic of faith formation coupled with four training sessions to encourage families to engage in four faith habits. Pre and post surveys were used to evaluate the progress of this project. The ultimate aim of this research mimics that of the researcher of this project, to encourage ministries to lead parents in faith formation in the home.

The author of this model believes in the small group approach to test his hypothesis and the effectiveness of ministry in the church. The author also agrees with the researcher of this project about the supportive role the church should play in the empowerment of parents and the faith formation of children. The author writes,

> Faith formation that had been a partnership between the family and the church became the primary responsibility of the church because it is the professional

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[42]Jeff Golliher, *A Deeper Faith: A Journey into Spirituality* (New York, NY.: Penguin, 2008).

[43]Douglas Schoelles, Equipping Parent To Be Spiritual Leaders In The Home (ProQuest, 2009).

[44]Ibid 1.

> religious institution. With ministries to children that were initially intended to supplement the family, churches supplanted the family as the locus of faith formation.[45]

The researcher agrees with the assessment of Schoelles. The churches desire to foster ministries that feed the entire community has somehow replaced the true essence of faith formation for families. Parents relinquished this responsibility or failed to embrace this opportunity because the church was providing ministries that somehow replaced the significance of home. While this was not the intent of many ministries, it could be the excuse parents used to justify the absence of faith leadership in the home.

Another project of significance to the researcher was conducted by Pat Springe entitled, *Equipping Parents to be Spiritual Champions in their Homes: How Three Churches Are Helping Parents Become Spiritual Leaders.*[46] This project evaluated ministries from three different congregations. The first congregation at Faith Promise Church, Knoxville, TN; First Christian Church, Canton, Ohio; and Gateway Church in Austin, TX. Each church developed curriculum, change ministry structures, and develop creative ways to empower parents to become involved in the spiritual lives of their children.

Faith Promise church decided to identify with their parents through connection meetings to allow parents to bond with their children before going to camp. First Christian Church developed a fresh curriculum called "Tastes Like Chickens, Eating Out with Jesus" which examined passages in the Bible where Jesus fellowshipped with others

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[45]Ibid 7.

[46]Pat Springle, Equipping Parents to Be Spiritual Champions in Their Home. LeadershipNetwork, 2009.

through a meal. The pastor and ministry leaders provided devotions for parents to share with their children that were written from scratch or used from other sources to share at mealtime. Gateway Church allowed parents to be involved in the baptism or dedication services of their children. According to this research, each approach had a significant impact on the parents in the different settings confirming the fact that parents will embrace spiritual leadership after they have been empowered to do so.

In both of the models presented, the sharing of the Word of God was instrumental and the researcher for this project has endeavored to develop a model for parents to become spiritual leaders by passing faith to their children. Children are receptive to teaching when it is delivered to them after preparation and organization. Faith is transferred though teaching and living the Word of God in front of them. Both of the models presented above encourage participation and involvement. The researcher for this project requires the same of the congregants involved in this study.

The first project dealt with churches with denominational support and in the second project churches were non-denominational. This proves that the needs are the same regardless of the history of the church. The research agrees with implementation of ministries to foster parental involvement and the changing and creating of curriculum to the ministry needs of the parents. However, each church must be careful not to lose the main focus of who they are and what they are about. Change is good if the church does not lose its biblical characteristics. Some traditions and rituals are to be sacred and should be administered by the preacher. There is a distinct difference between empowering to do faith formation or transfer in the home and changing the entire program or culture of the

church to accomplish this task. The church has to minister to the needs of the whole. There are some people in the church who will not be blessed change or the institution of programs and ministries that goes against the biblical culture of the church. Leaders must be careful not to segregate members while trying to provide relevant ministries for the total population of the church.

Trends in Biblical Parenting and Faith Formation

The future of faith formation will, in large part be determined by how well churches provide comprehensive, lifelong faith formation that is inclusive of all ages and generations and responsive to the diverse life situations and spiritual needs of people in all four scenarios: people of vibrant faith and active engagement in a church, people who participate in church life but are not spiritually committed, people who are spiritual but not engaged in a church community, and people who are uninterested in the spiritual life and not affiliated with a church community.[47] The pastor and the congregation should assess the needs of the congregation and community as well as the current ministry structure to ascertain the relevance of the programs and ministries offered by the church. There are numerous methods and techniques available to reach out to parents who are facing challenging situations when it comes to fostering faith formation in the lives of their children.

Current trends in faith formations encourage the use of technology to make curriculums, programs, and Bible lessons assessable to a larger audience of people that fit a least one of the categories mentioned above. Virtual classrooms, on-line courses, live

[47]Designing the Shape of Faith Formation 2020.

streams from conferences and worship services, and webinars will be an asset to any congregation desiring to diversify their ministry offerings. Face to face teaching and virtual technology will provide people more options to engage in faith-formation during the busyness of life.

John Roberto has dedication his ministry establishing systems aimed at making faith formation relevant and assessable to every generation and family structure in the church. His, *Designing the Shape of Faith Formation 2020*, introduces this diversified outreach of faith formation in a process called Lifelong Faith Formation Network.

> Faith formation is no longer about finding the program for a particular age group or generation. Churches can now meet people at the point of their spiritual, religious, and learning needs and offer personalized pathways for faith growth. Today, as never before, churches have access to faith formation programming activities and resources that can be personalized and customized to address the diversity of people's religious and spiritual needs. Resources for learning abound in every environment (at home, in the church, in the community, online). A primary task of a Lifelong Faith Formation Network is to identify these resources and link individuals, families, and communities with them effectively. The reality of faith formation programming is that churches can offer activities that cater to niches such as individuals, families, and small groups with a particular spiritual or religious need, interest, passion, concern, or life issue.[48]

There are several articles that support this trend for future faith formation in every generation. *Best Practices in Children's Faith Formation*[49] by John Roberto and Katie Pfiffner and *Faith Formation for Every Adult in Your Church-It's Possible Today,*[50] also by John Roberto, believe that faith formation offerings in the future must be diverse and

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[48]Ibid 43.

[49]John Roberto and Katie Pfiffner, Best Practices in Children's Faith Formation, (Lifelong Faith, @Lifelong Faith Associates, 2007.)

[50]John Roberto, Faith Formation for Every Adult in Your Church-It's Possible Today.(Lifelong Faith 2009).

tailored to the needs of the community that the ministry focus is trying to reach. The "one size fits all" approach is no longer encouraged because of the different needs of the target audiences or congregants. If pastors want their faith formation to do more, they have to offer a variety of programs using modern technology to get the information to those in need.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Biblical Foundations

There are several scriptures in the Bible that support biblical parenting and faith. Faith is the attribute that moves humankind through the Christian experience. In both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, faith is the underlying theme through the stories of tragedy and triumph for the Israelites. God called, men and women answered and operated according to their trust and belief. Noah, Abram, Jacob, and Moses are just a few examples of men who made a significant impact in biblical history by simply following the will of God. The call of God comes with the assurance of God's presence through the Holy Spirit. The proper response for believers is to do what is required by exercising spiritual gifts to impact the lives of others.

This doctoral project focused on the call of parents to become spiritual leaders in the home to raise children of faith. The Old Testament scripture that supports this project comes from Deuteronomy 6:1-9.

> Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the ordinances—that the LORD your God charged me to teach you to observe in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy, so that you and your children and your children's children may fear the LORD your God all the days of your life, and keep all his decrees and his commandments that I am commanding you, so that your days may be long. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe them diligently, so that it may go well with you, and so that you may multiply greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has promised you. Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down

> and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates[1]

This book is very much a repetition of both the history and the laws contained in the three previous books. There is no new history here, except the death of Moses in the final chapter. The former laws are repeated and commented on, explained and enlarged on, and some individual commands are added with detailed reason to back them up. The Greek interpreters call it *Deuteronomy,* which means the "*second law* or a *second edition of the law*"; not that it had amendments, for none were needed, but it had additions to give further directions to people in different cases not mentioned before.[2] The English title for this book comes from the Greek translation of Deuteronomy 17:18, which speaks of the king having "a copy of the law". The Greek Septuagint inaccurately rendered this verse *as deuteronomion*, meaning "second law". However, this book is not a second law but a renewal of the convenient Moses made at Mount Sinai, which site is also called Mount Horeb. Rather than giving a title for each book, the Hebrew Bible follows the ancient custom of naming a book by its opening line. In Hebrew, Deuteronomy starts with "these are the words"; therefore, it was simply called Debarim, "The Words." [3]

According to Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., there are at least three different ways this book can be examined: (1) as the three great speeches of Moses, (2) as a text exhibiting the form of the vassal treaties of the great kings of the second millennium BC, or (3) as an expanded exposition on the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments. Using the repeated

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[1]Deuteronomy 6:1-9.

[2]Martin H. Manser, *The New Matthew Henry Commentary*, (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2010) 201.

[3] Gary M Burge and Andrew E. Hill, *The Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary*, (Baker House, Grand Rapids, MI, 2012) 146.

rhetorical markers of "These are the words", "This is the law, and "These are the terms", it is possible to detect the three key speeches/sermons of Moses, each with a distinct focus, learning from history, explaining the law of God, and renewing the covenant.[4] Characteristic theological themes permeate Deuteronomy. God is the central focus. This is the God of the Exodus, the God of history who has given victory in war and the promised gift of the land. This is also the Creator, the God of nature who blessed Israel with rain and fertility.

James May continues the theological discussion. He states,

> Israel is a people chosen by God. God loves Israel, and love becomes the basic principle of the relationship between God and Israel. This love is known to Israel through its memory of God's redemption in the Exodus, and nurture in the wilderness. God's supreme gift to Israel is the good land, the land promised long ago to the patriarchs. The goodness, richness and fertility of the land are constantly emphasized, but this land also contains within it the temptation to forgetfulness and apostasy.[5]

According to Kaiser, some seventy-five times Deuteronomy stresses that the land of Canaan was a gift from Yahweh to Israel. The land is not that nation's own possession by any natural right or effort, it belongs to the Lord. It is theirs only because the Lord has sworn on an oath to give it to the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Sixteen times in this book, Israel is also called to "remember" what God has done for them, especially in their redemption from Egypt. But such recollections serve them well for the present and project into the future in the final acts of God in history. The act of remembering is not a purely cognitive one; it also presumes and included action based on that memory.[6]

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[4]Ibid 146.

[5]James L. Mays, *Harper Collins Bible Commentary* (San Francisco, CA, 1988) 190.

[6]Gary M Burge and Andrew E. Hill, *The Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary*, (Baker House, Grand Rapids, MI, 2012) 148.

In the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy, Moses taught the Israelites everything that was commanded of him to teach by God. He was providing detailed instructions for godly living by observing the laws that were mentioned in the chapter before. Deuteronomy 6:1-3 begins the detailed explanation of the commandments, as some of their implications are spelled out more fully. This instruction will be given so that all may "fear the Lord". Few expressions in the Old Testament embrace more what it is to listen, love, and serve God than to "fear God."[7] Moses tells this new generation of Israelites to fear or revere the Lord and to make a commitment to serve and love Him only. Verses four through nine have been commonly called the Shema.

According to the *Essential Bible Dictionary,*

> The Shema is a name given to the confessions found in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (recited with Numbers 15:37-41 in synagogue services). This designation derives from the first word of the passage, *Shema'* which means, "Hear!" (The word Shema is also the name of a place and of several persons). [8]

The *Life in the Spirit Study Bible*, states,

> The Shema is the classical declaration of the monotheistic character of God; it is followed by a twofold injunction to the Israelites (1) to love God with all their hearts, soul and might and (2) to teach their faith diligently to their children.[9]

Verse four teaches monotheism, this doctrine affirms that God is the one true God, not a pantheon of different gods, and is all-powerful among all the gods and spirits of the world. This God must be the sole object of Israel's love and obedience. This aspect of oneness serves as the basis for prohibiting the worship of other gods.[10] Since God is the

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[7]Ibid 156.

[8]Essential Bible Dictionary.

[9]Life in the Spirit Study Bible 281.

[10]Ibid 281.

one and only God, verse five commands to love him with everything that is within, such as the heart, mind, soul and strength, as well as the total being. Jesus said that loving God with all of ourselves is the first and greatest commandment (Matthew 22:37-39). This command combined with the command to love your neighbor (Leviticus 18:18), encompasses all the other Old Testament laws.[11] Verse six, deals with the issue of the heart. The Bible should be instrumental in the faith formation of the believer to turn the heart and mind towards God to accomplish the divine will of the Master.

Deuteronomy 6:7-9 are the primary scriptures of focus for this doctoral project. Moses taught the people, particularly the parents, to impress the law and the history upon their children at home so that they would have a solid foundation on which to base their beliefs. Tell the children so they will be informed and gain an understanding of God's divine nature and incorporate the teaching and beliefs into their own lives. The Israelites were to transfer faith through spoken word and commitment to serve the Lord in their worship, day to day interactions, and by following the Commandments of God. The children would not only hear faith but see faith in action. These actions were to be duplicated from generation to generation.

To support this statement, Kaiser writes,

> Parents in Israel are to make sure conversation about such things is a daily part of their children's lives. There is to be no excuse for neglecting their children's spiritual welfare. As families eat together, they are to talk around the table about the Lord. Later on, many Jewish families will take verse 8-9 literally, making small boxes with these verses inside strapped to their foreheads, called phylacteries and attaching similar boxes to their doorpost, called menzuzas.[12]

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[11]Life Application Study Bible, Tyndale House and Zondervan, 2005) 263.

[12] Gary M Burge and Andrew E. Hill, *The Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary*, (Baker House, Grand Rapids, MI, 2012) 156.

The Life Application Study Bible also supports this statement of the researcher. It further explains the beliefs of that time.

> The Hebrews were extremely successful at making religion an integral part of life. The reason for their success was that religious education was life-oriented, no information-oriented. They used the context of daily life to teach about God. The key to teaching your children to live for God is stated simply and clearly in these verses. If you want your children to follow God, you must make God a part of your everyday experience. You must teach your children diligently to see God in all aspects of life, not just those that are church related.[13]

One key way to express love for God is to be concerned with the spiritual welfare of our children and to endeavor to bring them into a faithful relationship with God. (1) The godly training of children should be a foremost concern of parents. (2) Spiritual instruction must be centered in the home, with both the father and mother taking part. Devotion to the Lord in the house is not an option: it is a direct command from the Lord. (3) The purpose of parental instruction is to teach the children to fear the Lord, to walk in all the Lord ways, to love and appreciate the Father, and to serve with all their hearts and souls. (4) The believer must diligently give his/her children a God-centered education where everything is related to God and God ways.[14]

According to the researcher, this passage of scripture defends the thesis of the project. In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses instructs the Israelites to take a reflective look at all the Lord had done for them. The Lord guided, sustained, protected, and provided for them in spite of their mistrust and unbelief. It iwas time for the children of the promise to cross over the Jordan, so Moses gives them specific instructions to stay faithful to God and follow the laws that were given. He tells them to teach the children in

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[13]Life Application Study Bible, Tyndale House and Zondervan, 2005) 263.

[14]Life in the Spirit Study Bible 285.

order to transfer knowledge and faith. For the Israelites, God was involved in their history and it will be up to the children to continue the legacy that was established by the forerunners of faith. Parents were to teach their children through the sharing of God's Word using visual expressions and acts of worship. The spiritual leader in the home had to make sure they were following the laws that were given so that the children's lives would be impacted by a living faith and the spoken faith. Moses commanded the Israelites to love the Lord through obedience and service.

Many generations later, the Apostle Paul deals with the same issues as it relates to parent/child relationships. He addresses this in Ephesians 6:1-4, the New Testament scripture for this project.

> Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honour thy father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise). That it may be well with thee, and thou mat live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.[15]

Ephesians is one of the mountain peaks of biblical revelation and has a unique place among Paul's letters. Rather than being hammered out on the anvil of doctrinal controversy or pastoral problems as many of Paul's other letters were, Ephesians conveys the impression of a rich overflow of revelation growing out of Paul's personal prayer life. Paul wrote this letter on behalf of Christ while most likely a prisoner in Rome. Ephesians has numerous affinities with Colossians and probably was penned shortly after Colossians. Both letters may have been carried simultaneously to their destinations by a co-worker of Paul names Tychicus.[16] The book of Ephesians was written around 62 A.D.

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[15] Ephesians 6:1-4.

by the Apostle Paul most likely in prison in Rome to the church at Ephesus to encourage them to advance in faith, love, and wisdom, to advance in Christian character, and to live lives worthy of their callings.

The letter to the Ephesians contains remarkably few references to specific persons, places, events, or controversial issues. It might be destined for any group of Gentile Christians who did not know Paul personally. The letter praises God for his blessing in Christ, extols God's great power and rich mercy, and reminds former Gentiles of the privileges that God has granted to them as well as to the Jews, with whom they have been united. Several scholars suggested that in spite of the epistolary form Ephesians is best understood as a summary of Paul's teachings, as a theological treatise or a meditation upon the theme "Christ and the Church," as a baptismal homily, or as an introduction to Paul's collected letters.[17]

The central message of Ephesians is God's re-creation of the human family according to his originally intended design. This new creation shatters the Jewish community's long-standing opinion that God accepts Jews and rejects non-Jews. The traditional criterion of distinction between the Jew and the non-Jew is obedience to the law, but this criterion, fostering pride and exclusivism, was abolished in Christ's sacrificial death. Consequently, nothing hinders reuniting all humanity as people of God, with Christ as the head. The fact that even within the church, let alone outside the church, this reunification is not fully in effect is the result of the advance arrival of the new age of God's rule. Even now, God endows his new family with the power of the Spirit,

[16]Life in the Spirit Study Bible 1855.

[17]James L. Mays, *Harper Collins Bible Commentary* (San Francisco, CA, 1988) 1113.

them to live out their future new life here and now. Thus, Ephesians focuses on God's people united in Christ through the power of the Spirit.[18]

In the passage of scripture listed above, Apostle Paul is addressing the issue of parenting according to the Law of God. Paul tells the church that parents must nurture their children in such a way to turn their hearts to God. The very core of Christian nurture is this: the heart of the father must be turned to the heart of the child in order to bring the heart of the child to the heart of the Savior. In bringing up their children, parents should show no favoritism, encourage as well as correct, punish only defiance or intentional wrongdoing, and dedicate their lives in love to their children with hearts of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.[19]

The Life Application Study Bible explains verse one through three as follows,

> There is a difference between obeying and honoring. To obey means to do as one is told; to honor means to respect and love. Children are not commanded to disobey God in obeying their parents. Adult children are not asked to be subservient to domineering parents. Children are to obey while under their parents' care, but the responsibility to honor parents is for life.
>
> If our faith in Christ is real, it will usually prove itself at home, in our relationships with those who know us best. Children and parents have a responsibility to each other. Children should honor their parents even if the parents are demanding and unfair. Parents should care gently for their children, even if the children are disobedient and unpleasant. Ideally, of course, Christian parents and Christian children will relate to each other with thoughtfulness and love. This will happen if both parents and children put the other's interest above their own-that is, if they submit to one another.[20]

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[18]Gary M Burge and Andrew E. Hill, *The Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary*, (Baker House, Grand Rapids, MI, 2012) 1356.

[19]Life in the Spirit Study Bible 1892.

[20]*Life Application Study Bible*, Tyndale House and Zondervan, 2005) 1989.

The researcher, along with the *Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary,* agrees with this statement.

> Once more, Paul speaks first to the dependent party in the matched pair; children are to obey their parents as their role in the call to mutual submission…The instruction to children to obey their parents is not simply a word to this or that specific child but a word to the entire nation about raising children among God's people.
>
> Paul calls parents to submit to their children in two ways. First, they must treat their children with dignity and respect, avoiding unnecessarily provoking them to anger through capricious and unkind treatment. The point is not the children's anger but the parent's provocation. Children only gradually learn the meaning of mature behavior from loving and submissive parents; they learn it either untaught or badly taught. Second, parents submit to their children by carrying out the high privilege and frequently frustrating task of bringing up children in Christian discipline and instruction. It requires every bit as much self-denial as what Paul recommended for married couples towards each other. We could conceivably read this text to say that the parents themselves are to be disciplined and instructed in the Lord as they bring up their children. [21]

Verse four encourages the parents to raise and nurture their children through a godly attitude, actions and attributes. The researcher believes that biblical parenting should foster spiritual growth and development for both the parent and the child, even when it comes to discipline and instructions. Correction must be done with the love of Christ in order to learn and grow from the experience. The Adam Clarke's Bible Commentary states,

> Avoid all severity; this will hurt your own souls, and do them no good; on the contrary, if punished with severity or cruelty, they will be only hardened and made desperate in their sins. Cruel parents generally have bad children. He who corrects his children according to God and reason will feel every blow on his own heart more sensibly than his child feels it on his body.
>
> Parents are called to correct; not to punish, their children. Those who punish them do it from a principle of revenge; those who correct them do it from a principle of affectionate concern. Nourish them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

[21]Gary M Burge and Andrew E. Hill, *The Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary*, (Baker House, Grand Rapids, MI, 2012) 1370.

> The mind is to be nourished with wholesome discipline and instruction, as the body is with proper food.[22]

The Life Application Bible supports the researcher as well. It states,

> The purpose of parental discipline is to help children grow, not to exasperate and provoke them to anger or discouragement. Parenting is not easy--it takes lots of patience to raise children in a loving, Christ-honoring manner. But frustration and anger should not be causes for discipline. Instead, parents should act in love, treating their children as Jesus treats the people he loves. This is vital to children's development and to their understanding of what Christ is like.[23]

The example of Christ, from a child's perspective should be seen through the actions of the parent. The Apostle Paul and Moses stress the importance of godly living and right actions by the parents to ensure successful faith development for the whole person, mind body and soul. There are no guarantees in parenting. Success may not be achieved at every interval of life nor does it mean that children of God-fearing parents will remain true to God and His Word. When living in an evil society where many of God's people are themselves unfaithful, the children of God can and will be influenced by their environment and peer pressure. If proper spiritual training has been provided, they may error but will not go far from what they have been taught. From Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus ,*the Life in the Spirit Study Bible* provides fifteen steps parents should take to lead their children to lives of godliness in Christ.

1. Dedicate your children to God at the beginning of their lives.
2. Teach your children to fear the Lord and turn away from sin, to love righteousness and to hate evil. Instill in them an awareness of God's attitude and judgment towards sin.
3. Teach your children to obey you by loving use of Biblical discipline.

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[22]Adam Clarke's Bible Commentary on Ephesians 6 www.godrules.net.

[23]*Life Application Study Bible*, Tyndale House and Zondervan, 2005) 1990.

4. Protect your children from ungodly influences by being aware of Satan's attempts to destroy them spiritually, through attraction to the world or through immoral companions.
5. Make your children aware that God is always observing and evaluating what they do, think, or say.
6. Do all you can to help your children to come early in life to personal faith, repentance and water baptism in Christ.
7. Establish your children in a spiritual church where God's Word is proclaimed, his righteous standards honored and the Holy Spirit is manifested. Teach them the motto: "I am a companion of all them that fear thee".
8. Encourage your children to remain separated from the world and to witness and work for God. Teach them that they are strangers and aliens on this earth that their real home and citizenship is in heaven with Christ.
9. Instruct your children in the importance of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
10. Teach your children that God loves them and has a specific purpose for their lives.
11. Instruct your children daily in God's Word both in conversation and family devotions.
12. Through example and exhortation, encourage your children to live lives devoted to prayer.
13. Prepare your children to suffer and endure persecution because of righteousness. They must know that all that all who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.
14. Lift your children up to god by constant and earnest intercession.
15. Have such love and concern for your children that you would be willing to pour out your life as if it were a sacrifice to the Lord, in order to deepen their faith and make their lives what they should be in the Lord.[24]

Biblical parenting teaches children to fear the Lord, to walk in all His ways, to love and appreciate Him, and to serve Him with all their hearts and souls. The believer must diligently give his/her children a God-centered education where everything is related to

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[24]Ibid 1892-3.

God and His ways.[25] Christian training has as its purpose the dedication of children to God by separating them from the world's evil influences and by instructing them in godly conduct. Parents must encourage their children to seek God for themselves through example and sharing the Word of God.

As biblical parents, the task of raising children of faith is essential. The Word of God is universal and encompasses all ages; therefore, it is relevant to believers who are facing crisis or situations that seems hard or difficult to solve. In today's times, people are constantly criticizing the church and Christianity as a whole. Many have turned their backs on God and constantly test the relevance of the scriptures to include the Gospels and the Creation stories. The Theodicy of God is constantly challenged and questioned. Is God real or fake? Did the Red Sea part or was it an El Nino? In other words, is it live or Memorex? If the parents along with the church refuse to embrace the responsibility of biblical parenting, children will adopt the world's deceptive attitudes and views. Children have to be committed to God through faith nurtured by the church and biblical teaching at home.

Historical Foundation

> "My mother told me I had to serve my time", said Anita Woods, a twelve year-old girl arrested for demonstrating against racial segregation in Birmingham. When asked if she wanted to go home, she replied. "Yes"! But I'd do it again. I'll keep on marching 'til I get freedom."[26]

This quote from a child involved in the Children's Crusade of 1963 thoroughly supports the researcher's premise that empowered parents will produce empowered

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[25]David C. Stamps and John Wesley Adams, *Life in the Spirit Study Bible* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI) 285.

[26]Erin Cook and Leanna Racine, The Children's Crusade and The Role of Youth in African American Freedom Struggle, (OAH Magazine of History, Vol19, No. 1, 2005) 31.

children through faith and devotion to God's Word. This point has been proven many times in the past as the accounts of empowered children standing firm on faith and against injustice flow through the pages of history, particularly the liberation movements of the 1950s and 1960s. Young people played an essential role in the African American freedom struggle, participating in many of the major campaigns of the civil rights movements as well as initiating personal protests against racial injustice. From Barbara Johns leading a strike of her fellow students at Morton High School in Farmville, Virginia, in 1951 to protest the inequalities between black and white education, to the children of Birmingham who were arrested as they dissented against the city's segregation policies, the contributions of young people were critical to the movement's success.[27]

Historically, children have made a significant impact through the pages of time. In the Bible, Jesus uses a child to teach a valuable lesson to the masses of people to depend on God for all things when he took a child's lunch and fed over 5000 people. Jesus rebuked his disciples for trying to keep the children from approaching him. He stated, "Suffer the little children to come unto me".[28] It was the children of the generation that left Egypt during the Exodus that actually crossed over the Jordan to the Promise Land. More importantly, it was the child, Jesus Christ, who was born into sin to save sinful generations from destruction. He was the prophesized Messiah, the Lamb that was slain from the foundations of the world, the Hope of Ages that was to bring restoration and healing to a world that was in political turmoil, social unrest, and spiritually deprivation.

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[27]Ibid 31.

[28] Mark 10:14.

The involvement of children was crucial to the success of the civil rights movement in order for black progress to be achieved. Samuel DeWitt Proctor states, the goal of black progress was clear: we wanted in, to become full participants and not marginalized mendicants. [29] To put it plainly, African Americans wanted a chance to provide for their families, to ensure their children were educated and have the same opportunities in the workforce. This progress fueled the liberation movements and kindled a fire for equality in the workplace and in public places.

Harmony between the races and justice is promised in the Pledge of Allegiance and the Constitution of the United States. Children were the catalyst that would reunite and bring new zeal and purpose during a time when adult support was waning. Individuals as young as six years old consciously decided or were ushered into the spotlight of desegregation battles. The words and images of these children were key to the monumental struggle to provide equal education to all Americans regardless of race, integrate lunch counters and libraries, and sit on buses without regard to race. They demonstrated determination, courage, and an awareness of basic fairness and social justice, and mobilized participation in the Civil Rights Movement by the nation at large.[30]

Racism in Alabama as a whole was considered to be the most severe in the country, particularly in the largest city of the state, Birmingham. The racial strife combined with the church bombings demonstrated the severity of this problem. Martin Luther King Jr. was jailed for the thirteenth time on April 12, 1963 in this city for ignoring a court order

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[29]Samuel Dwitt Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped for: A Memoir of African American Faith* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press. 1995) 96.

[30]John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, *From Slavery to Freedom, a History of African American* (Washington, DC: McGraw-Hill, 1994) 495.

to halt the peaceful protests. The Civil Rights Movement organizers decided to use children to counteract the strong resistance of racial inequality in the city. On May 2, 1963 nearly a thousand elementary, middle and high school students in Birmingham, Alabama changed the tide of the civil rights movement that sent ripple effects across the world by participating in what was called the Children's Crusade. They skipped school and marched from Sixth Street Baptist Church to downtown Birmingham utilizing the tactics of nonviolent direct action taught to them by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the Alabama Christian Movement for Civil Rights (ACMHR). As they approached police lines, they were arrested and hauled off in school buses and paddy wagons. [31]

On May 3, 1963 the children continued with the nonviolent protest only to be met with stiff opposition from the police. Diane McWhorter gives an account of events that transpired before the march. She writes,

> Bevel had named Friday, May 3, "Double D-Day." Fifteen hundred kids were absent from school. Governor George Wallace threatened to have their teachers investigate for collaboration. At ten o'clock the truants converged on Sixteenth Street Baptist. A block away, in the Gaston Motel, SCLC had just concluded another difficult session with the central committee. "Let those kids stay in school," A. G. Gaston had told King. "They don't know nothing". King replied, "Brother Gaston, let those people go into the street where they'll learn something." He and Shuttlesworth left confidently for their press conference in the court yard. King told the reporters that the demonstrations were going to get more intense until they got" promise and action" from the city.[32]

Many civil rights leaders working with Dr. King were divided regarding the children. Some felt that they were too young to be subject to the ills of racisms and the hatred that

[31]Maya Beecham, The Children's Crusade, (Insight Network; www.insightnews.com; 2012).

[32]Diane McWhorter, *Carry Me Home; The Climatic Battle of the Civil Rights Revolution* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2001) 350.

followed. Martin Luther King felt the children's presence was important to the success of the movement. Bull Connor, Commissioner for the City of Birmingham, directed the police and fire department to use force by blasting them with high-pressure water hoses and attack dogs. Several hundred children were arrested as the entire ordeal was published all over the nation. On the evening of May 3, 1963 King offered encouragement to parents of the young protesters in a speech delivered at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. He said, "Don't worry about your children: they are going to be alright. Don't hold them back if they want to go to jail, for they are not only doing a job for themselves, but for all of America and for all of mankind."[33]

To bring resolution to the protest, the United States Justice Department finally ended the campaigns on May 10th by reaching an agreement with the SCLC and local officials to desegregate many areas of the city including the downtown stores and to release all of the demonstrators from jail. In return the boycotts and sit-ins would cease. A couple of weeks later, the Birmingham Board of Education announced that all students who participated in the demonstrations would be either suspended or expelled. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the SCLC teamed up to fight this ruling. They immediately took the issue to the local federal district court, where the judge upheld the ruling. This ruling was short lived because on the same day as the first ruling, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the decision and condemned the Board of Education for its actions.

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[33]Martin Luther King, Jr. "Institute and the Global Freedom Struggle". (article found on the on-line Encyclopedia from the Martin Luther King, Jr., Institute website.)

According to the research, opposition to the Children's Crusade was severe from both races. Many people across the nation were appalled at the images shown on national television of the violence suffered by the children from the Birmingham police department. As stated earlier, some of the civil rights leaders such as A. G. Gaston were opposed as well. Martin Luther King's biggest opposition, according to the research, came from another civil rights activist, Malcolm X. He states, "Real men don't put their children on the firing line."[34] Martin Luther King and Malcolm X had one focus, equal right, but two different views on how to get it done.

Martin Luther King Jr. believed in equality for all regardless of color or gender. His methods were non-violent with success being achieved through the process of time, patience, prayer, and faith. His movement was based on his calling and his mission was liberation through empowerment to change systems that were oppressive and discriminatory. On the other hand, Malcolm X's approach was totally different. As a spokesman for the Nation of Islam he taught black supremacy and advocated for equality by "any means necessary". In his eyes the two races could not co-exist, therefore, the work that was done by Martin Luther King was meaningless. He believed in separation and violence to achieve the desired end. They were two distinguished men with a focus on liberation and process theology. They differ in the methods used to achieve this success. The beliefs of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X may stem from the fact that their childhoods were vastly different, given that the Martin lived in a very comfortable and middle class home while Malcolm experienced the worst in an underprivileged home. Martin was very educated, while the Malcolm was self-taught after what little

[34]Ibid Martin Luther King Jr. and the Global Freedom struggle.

schooling he had received. Martin Luther King actually came from a family who was well-known in their area of Atlanta, while Malcolm X was a virtual nobody.[35]

Despite the opposition of Malcolm X, the researcher believes that the Children's Crusades of 1963 provided the catalyst needed to spark the liberation movements. The movement needed new fire, new zeal, and new faces. The children were empowered by parents, purpose and prayer to make a stand that would turn the tide of racism for the nation. Taylor Branch writes,

> The blow landed with strange subliminal force. Nearly everyone reacted to the riveting images of dogs biting children, but public commentaries were loath to analyze the phenomenon, and retrospectives on the decisive political tactic were nowhere to be found. Insofar as public figures did comment specifically on children's jail marches, they were critical…Still beneath the silence and disparagement alike, there were signs of a rare, deeper tribute in the form of dumbstruck attachment…Where reason had nothing, a tide of emotion swept forward conviction that segregation was fragile and that human nature contained untapped reserves for improvement. From the first children's march on May 2, the New York Times published more stories about race in the next two weeks than during the previous year. Attention spilled from the news to the editorial and features pages and from there to a rash of projects on racial subjects that within a year published new and reprinted books at the rate of nine per week.[36]

Martin Luther King and the parents of these children learned life's lessons that could not be taught from a book. Empowerment through action was essential to the mission of the civil rights movements at the time. The children's crusades were successful avenues Martin Luther King used to keep the fire of liberation flowing from the parents to the children and ultimately to the communities that impacted the world. Carolyn Maull McKinstry was a child of the crusades. She writes,

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[35]DifferenceBetween.net, Difference Between Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X.

[36]Taylor Branch, *The King Years: Historical Moments in the Civil Rights Movement* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2013) 49.

> It was May 2, 1963. The time to march had come. During morning classes, excited students all over the city began to leave their schools. Some slipped out of the windows and jumped to the ground. Many more escaped through front and side doors. I squeezed my skinny body between the school's chain-link fence and padlocked gate. At this point I could feel nothing but adrenaline. It was the first time I had ever left the school grounds without permission. I prayed my father wouldn't find out.
>
> It was finally time to march.
>
> Students from all over Birmingham jointed my classmates and me as we walked to Sixteenth Street Baptist Church and Kelly Ingram Park. Some students hiked eighteen miles to join the march. Young people form Miles College arrived in cars and buses. We carried poster board signs, sang "Oh Freedom" at the top of our lungs, and enthusiastically clapped our hands. It seemed like a big pep rally. The police stopped us once and asked us the purpose of the march. Then they told us to disperse. We ran and scattered in different directions, but we all arrived back at the same place, the church corner.
>
> When we reached the church, I stopped and stared. There were white tanks filling Birmingham's bustling streets. Army tanks! No one had said anything about army tanks. They made Birmingham look like a war zone. Goose bumps of terror rose on my arms. "Are those tanks going to shoot bullets at us, like in a real war?
>
> But I had no time for fear. Anyway, the friends I had known all my life-the kids I went to school and church with-stood all around me. They gave me the courage I needed as we continued our march.[37]

The researcher believes that the story of Carolyn McKinstry and countless others who were a part of these crusades will encourage parents and children to embrace their mission in life and lead their families in spiritual development without fear and with overwhelming faith to believe that the outcome is going to work for the good of humankind through Jesus Christ.

The Children crusades called not only children to action but the entire nation. In every region, North, South, East and West, people were protesting for injustices in the

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[37]Carolyn Maull McKinstry with Denise George, *While the World Watched* (Tyndale Publishing: 2011) 130-131.

workplace, segregation in housing and education. People protested police brutality, unfair racial zoning in schools and unfair voting practices. The children were empowered and fanned the flames to keep the Civil Rights Movement alive and burning. They were instructed or trained to protest peaceable and to adopt the stance of non-violence like the adults and remain true to the task. Their involvement in this movement speaks to this doctoral project because it shows that children can make a difference when empowered for a cause. There were parents sharing the struggle with their children that led them to act in the only way they knew how, through faith and determination to make a difference. These children were trained to do the right thing and to stand against injustice which would impact them greatly in their futures.

The Civil Rights Movement was one of the most effective agents of change in our lifetime. After the Plessey vs. Ferguson case of 1896 requiring separate by equal facilities, the racial tensions in the United States escalated, especially in the South. Several Civil Rights Acts were instituted to end segregation in America because someone or group risked it all to make a difference. The Children's Crusade added momentum to this movement in the city of Birmingham. The sacrifice that was made by these children did not go unnoticed locally nor was it ignored nationally. These children wanted to make a difference and did what they could to make the world a better place to live.

Theological Foundations

The theological thought for this project follows the thinking of two philosophers named Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne called process theology. It is a metaphysical argument that defends the relational nature through interaction, love and

persuasion that flows though the course of human existence. For both Whitehead and Hartshorne, it is an essential attribute of God to be fully involved in and affected by temporal processes. This idea contrasts neatly with traditional forms of theism that hold God to be in all respects non-temporal (eternal), unchanging (immutable) and unaffected by the world (impassible). Process theism does not deny that God is in some respects eternal, immutable, and impassible, but it contradicts the classical view by insisting that God is in some respects temporal, mutable and passible. [38] It is a philosophical view that deals with the state of becoming, changing and time. Many theologians have endeavored to identify God's role in this thought. C. Robert Mesle states,

> Process theology is the name for an effort to make sense in the modern world of the basic Christian faith that God is love. That is not an easy task. It requires that we rethink the nature of both God and the world. [39] Many modern theologians would very rightly point out that any vision of divinity or even of nature that humans create must be understood as a mode or myth. Process theology, in this sense, is a thoroughly modern "myth" precisely to the extent that it creatively draws upon and leads the way in the very best of our modern struggles to envision the nature of reality, the meaning of love, and the depths of the sacred as we experience it all today.[40]

The premise of this theology is found in the name. Process theologians believe that everything has a flow and can be defined by processes. There is a dependence or connection that exists between God and humankind. This tendency to share with one another allows harmony and free will to flow from and to each other. Paul Tillich in his systematic theological approach, mimics many of the ideas of process theologians. First, he is oriented toward a philosophy of existence instead of a philosophy of substantialism.

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[38]Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2008 Daniel Vines Process Theism First published in 2004 and revised on October 6, 2008.

[39] C. Robert Mesle, *Process Theology, A Basic Introduction* (Chalice, St, Louis, MO 1993) 2.

[40] Ibid 5.

His objective is a philosophy of life in both the existential and metaphysical sense namely, a philosophy of human existence and of the actualization of potential being. Second, the philosopher cannot speak of being without also speak of becoming. Becoming is just as genuine in the structure of being as what remains unchanged in the process of becoming.[41]

John Wesley's theology can also be viewed as process theology. Wesley sees God as working with each human being through the course of our lives. He pays close attention to the actual changes that occur: the emergence of faith, growth in love, falling back into sin. A larger part of his preaching and theology deals with the stages of this process and how God work in them. It is worked out in a real process of interaction between the individual and God. He is not a process theologian in the sense of having chosen to build his theology in relations to a process philosophy instead of a substance one. He was far from ignorant of philosophy and he engaged philosophers in significant ways, but these philosophers did not themselves develop their thought in terms of this alternative. They were all substance philosophers, even though their work began the process of undercutting the concept of substance. Wesley was a process thinker. I believe, because he was immersed in the Bible and because he was radically open to what he actually experienced.[42]

There are many critics of process theology and the Wesleyan process thought. At the other end of the spectrum is a view held by a few within Methodism that Wesley was the theologian's theologian and his work is treated with almost as much reverence as

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[41] Tyron Inbody, *Paul Tillich and Process Theology*, (Adrian College, MI, Source, 1975.) 30.

[42]John Cobb, Jr. *Wesley the Process Theologian.* (www.religion-online.org/showarticle)

Holy Scripture. Given the lack of a work of systematic theology such as Barth's *Dogmatics* or Calvin's *Institutes*, it is difficult to defend this view of Wesley in any serious and sustained way. The premise is that systematic theology is the only form of theology worthy of study. The lack of a Wesleyan *Summa* is problematic for "serious" scholars. Those who hold to Wesley as a great theologian often have to clear this hurdle to even gain entry into the conversation. The critics of Wesleyan process thought outside of the process theology anti-Christian debate, is that the Wesleyan theology as a whole lack systematic, metaphysical, or philosophical backing. According to the critics, it was written for the "common person".[43]

The foundation of Wesley's belief about process theology came from the parenting of an empowered woman by the name of Susanna Wesley. This theologian was named the "Mother of Methodism" because of the enormous impact she had on and in the lives of her children. Susanna Wesley was an extraordinary woman that believed that the success of a mother is seen through her children. She was raised by Christian parents and at an early age dared to go against the established processes of their time for woman. She was educated and well versed in the struggles between the Church of England and the movement of her birth. Shortly before she turned thirteen years of age, the future Susanna Wesley decided to become a full-fledged member of the Church of England. Her thorough examination of the controversy between them led her to believe that the established church was right. Though Susanna's decision was a radical one, it was based on solid inquiry and reflection. For this reason, her father could have nothing but respect

[43]Scot Bontrager, *Religion Inward & Outward: Upon Our Lord's Sermon on The Mount* (IV, V, VI, and VII) *Ascetic Theology*, (Trust Network, Indievisible.org, 2009) 1.

for her."[44] The teaching and the training she received from her father and the Puritans and the love for God, allowed her to make a decision that was controversial yet rewarding. The Methodist Church is the benefactors of this decision.

It was through the struggle of the Puritans and the Church of England she met and married Samuel Wesley. Nineteen children were born to this union. Susanna instilled in her children Christian faith through self discipline, education, and prayer. She was a proponent of biblical parenting and established family devotions and Bible studies at home. Kathy McReynolds write,

> Coming across a stirring account of two Danish missionaries and their missionary endeavors in a foreign land, Susanna was so "quicken" by their story that she determined to do something similar for the glory of God. She began by meeting with each of her children on an individual basis. She would talk with each of them about the condition of their soul and about their commitment to God. If her children had any questions about their faith, Susanna would answer them to the best of her ability. [45]

Susanna Wesley was empowered to make a difference in the lives of her children. Biblical parenting became a priority as she began to transfer the faith that was apart of her history to the lives of each child through personal time and devotion. The lines of communication were open for them to share and ask questions. This leadership spilled over to the community as she began to meet with neighbors to share the Word of God and answer any questions they had about their relationship with God. She was an empowered parent, reaching beyond her environ to help others.

In support of the process theological thought of her son, Susanna Wesley was methodical in her approach to parenting. She never lost her puritanical views but was open to change that would stimulate her thoughts and faith in God. She believed in

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[44] Kathy McReynolds, *Woman of Faith Susanna Wesley*, (Minneapolis, MN.: Bethany House Publishers 1998) 26.

[45] Ibid 63.

spending time with God and the importance of the Holy Communion in faith development. John Newton writes,

> For Susanna, meditations led naturally into self-examination, and she addressed herself in the second person as she reviewed her thoughts, words and actions in a detailed and clinical scrutiny. A typical noontide meditation runs: "It is necessary for you, if you would preserve your liberty, and live free from sin, to mortify your appetites, for if they remain in power, restrain them as you will, or can still some circumstances or seasons will occur, wherein they betray you, and compel you to act contrary to your better judgment.[46]

Susanna's father was instrumental in her faith development and often encouraged his congregations to look inside of self and to examine the condition of the heart. This train of thought was also transferred to her son, John Wesley. Gregory S. Clappers reflects on John Wesley's theology as it relates to the condition of the heart in his book, *As If the Heart Mattered: A Wesleyan Spirituality*. He states,

> What makes Wesley's vision of Christianity different from many others, though, is something that cannot be captured by either orthopraxis or orthodoxy (right belief). This element is what I have elsewhere termed orthokardia (right heart). Though Wesley himself never used the term orthokardia, he never stopped proclaiming the "religion of the heart". When explicating "heart religion", Wesley usually spoke about the "affections" or "tempers" as the true indicators of the nature of the heart. Certainly, what we do says a lot about who we are as does what we think and to what creeds we give our assent.[47]

John Wesley's understanding of the Christian life including justification and sanctification is thoroughly processive through the influence of his mother. He believes that the way God and human beings function in this process is just the way Whitehead's philosophy depicts the working of God and creatures. Wesley sees God's work in human beings as persuasive. Process thought joins him in rejecting the notion that God

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[46]John A. Newton, *Susanna Wesley and the Puritan Tradition in Methodism*;, 2nd edition, Epiworth, London (1968), 141.

[47]Gregory Clapper, *As If the Heart Mattered: A Wesleyan Spirituality*. (Nashville, TN,:Upper Room, 1997) 19-21.

determines all that happens. The way we respond to God's influence is crucial in determining what actually happens.[48]

Susanna transferred faith, discipline, biblical principles and knowledge to her children by example. She established family rules that were not to be broken and became an intentional presence in their affairs just the same. She was the spiritual leader in the home who struggled through the successes and failures of her husband's ministerial and personal conflicts and the mounting debt that followed her through the course of her life. As Samuel labored on the book of Job, Susanna taught the children. Her dream of producing children who would help change the world still continued. To enable her to do this, she produced a set of rules. Here they are as she later outlined them to her son John.

1. It had been observed that cowardice and fear of punishment often lead children into lying. To prevent this a law was made that whoever was charged with a fault of which they were guilty, if they would…confess it and promise to amend (they) should not be beaten.
2. That no sinful action, as lying, pilfering at church or on the Lord's day, disobedience, quarreling, etc. should ever pass unpunished.
3. That no child should ever be chided or beat twice for the same fault, and that if they amend they should never be upbraided with it afterwards.
4. That every single act of obedience, especially when it crossed upon their own inclinations, should always be commended, and frequently rewarded according to the merits of the case.
5. That if ever any child performed an act of obedience, or did anything with an intention to please, though the performance was not well, yet the obedience and intention should be kindly accepted, and the child with sweetness directed how to do better for the future.
6. That propriety (the rights of property) be…preserved, and non suffered to invade the property of another in the smallest manner, though it were but the value of a farthing or a pin, which they might not take from the owner without, much less against, his consent.

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[48] *Process & Faith,* Center for Process Studies, Claremont School of Theology ©2012 Process & Faith.

7. That promises be strictly observed; and a gift once bestowed, and so the right passed away from the donor, be not resumed, but left to the disposal of him to who it was given, unless it were conditional, and the condition of the obligation not performed.
8. That no girl be taught to work until she can read very well. [49]

There are believed to be sixteen rules that governed the home recorded in other sources. For the material obtained by the researcher, Susanna Wesley's autobiography gives the rules mentions above. What can clearly been seen in all of the rules she established was her propensity for order, structure, and discipline. The methodical parenting style would prove to be very influential in all of the children that lived to adulthood.

Susanna's process thought can also be seen in her view of successful parenting as it relates to the spirit of a child. According to Susanna,

> In order to form the minds of children, the first thing to be done is to conquer their will, and bring them to an obedient temper. To inform the understanding is a work of time, and must with children proceed by slow degrees as they are able to bear it: but the subjecting the will is a thing which must be done at once; and the sooner the better. For by neglecting timely correction, they will contract a stubbornness and obstinacy which is hardly ever after conquered; and never, without using such severity as would be as painful to me as to the child. In the esteem of the world they pass for kind and indulgent, whom I call cruel, parents, who permit their children to get habits which they know must be afterwards broken. Nay, some are so stupidly fond, as in sport to teach their children to do things which, in a while after, they have severely beaten them for doing.[50]

The breaking of the will is not instantaneous but evolves of a process of time and influence from the spiritual leader in the home applying biblical principles and structure. The will has to be formed and shaped with interaction and teaching to establish biblical principles. Discipline was important in their household because each child knew the

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[49]Charles Ludwig, *Susanna Wesley, Mother of John and Charles* (Fenton, MI: Mott Media, 1984), 155-56.

[50]Prayer to Prayer

family rules and was assigned duties at home that had to be done before they could enjoy personal time of their own.

Susanna believed in structure and prayer and passed the legacy on to her children. Although the specific instances and extent of Susanna Wesley's influence upon all of her surviving children cannot always be documented, there exists a sufficient quantity of published primary materials relative to one or two of them that leads to the conclusion that her role in that regard can never be overstated or overestimated. Certainly the Wesley children did not emerge from the nursery of Epworth rectory as spiritual and intellectual clones of their mother or of one another, but the mere presence and dominance of Susanna Wesley during their formative years affected all of them to certain degrees. Having determined the obvious, the only issue remaining concerns the methods by which she continued to exercise her influence and the extent to which her instruction and advice gained acceptance and manifested themselves in later thoughts and actions.[51]

The researcher is empowered by the life of Susanna Wesley and the methods she used to raise her children. The process thoughts of her son are reflective of the mother's biblical parenting approach. Susanna believed that God was and is involved in the lives of his people and is the force in life that leads and guides when allowed by humankinds. God and humans are in direct relationship by will or choice. God is all knowing and works within the processes of life to impact the lives of humankind. God has divine plans for the individual but the individual has free will to responds contrary to what God desires. Despite this choice, God abiding presence is still in the lives of humans even if

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[51]Samuel J. Rogal, *Susanna Annesley Wesley (1669-1742): A Biography of Strength and Love* (Bristol, IN: Wyndham, 2001) 146.

consequences result from bad decision making. Life is full of process and it is encouraging to see how Susanna lived through these processes, prepared her children for these process, and to see the fruit of her labor through the lives of her children, particularly John Wesley.

Today, the Methodist Church is the benefactor of Susanna's faith. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, often praised his mother for the way she passed her faith to her children and the stance she took in the home and the community to be a woman of God and to be faithful to her husband. The mission of Christ was lived and taught in the home, and the outcome for Christianity is tremendous. These examples prove that Biblical parenting is important and should begin in the child at an early age. "When it comes right down to it, Christians teaching has more to do with passing on values than with passing on information. But we also realize that values are passed on, in part, through content. Stories of faith, personal stories, and the lessons we choose to teach all pass along values and beliefs."[52] The values that are taught at home and church will shape their decisions for the future. The Children's Crusades of the Civil Rights Movement and the actions of Susanna Wesley are the results of the two coming together to make a positive difference on society. It should be the philosophy of every parent, school teacher, Sunday school teacher, pastor, and leader to build a solid foundation for children based on the Word of Good and positive role models to follow.

[52] Israel Galindo, *The Craft of Christian Teaching Essentials for becoming a very good teacher* (Valley Forge, VA: Judson Press 1988) 51.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Empowering Parents to Become Spiritual Leaders in the Home to Raise Children of Faith was designed to encourage and equip parents with the tools necessary to become spiritual leaders in the home at Gilmore Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church. As a result of this project, parents recognized their importance in the faith formation process of their children and the need to use creative measures to share the Word of God that would be applicable to their family structure. The methodological approach to this project began by identifying the problem with faith sharing between parents and their children in the home. This issue was identified through needs assessments given to the congregation, conversations with parents and children, and the declining ministries of the church. The synergy between the context and the researcher was apparent and the researcher used the materials at her disposal to restructure ministries and develop faith-formation exercises for the church as a whole.

Even though the researcher had both parents present in the home, their agendas were different when it came to biblical parenting. The mother was the nurturer and spent time developing faith formation activities to share with her children. This philosophy of parenting puts the burden of responsibility for faith formation on one parent causing the family dynamic to mimic that of a single parent home. This synergistic view is apparent in the context and the community. As a person of who lives through and preaches from a

faith perspective, it was crucial that the researcher develop a model for faith formation to be introduced to the ministry context. Some of the members of Gilmore Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church, like the researcher, have the same family dynamic of both parents in the home with different parental approaches. Many are single parents with little or no contact with their children's fathers. Blended families are numerous with grandparents taking the lead in raising second and third generation children. The combination of the researcher's life experience, the ministry context, and the culture of the community helped the researcher deduce that ministries were needed to encourage parents to lead their children in faith formation outside of the church in their current family structures.

The next step for the researcher was to review the literature and research pertaining to the parental responsibility of faith formation in the home. The literature revealed that possible remedies were to empower parents through the study of the Word of God. This process could be approached in many different ways. There was the possibility of a small group process or one on one session with the parents assessing individual needs and developing studies that would be tailored to their family structures. The researcher envisioned a solution that would bring parents together from different family structures and biblical knowledge levels to share and provide encouragement for one another during this process. The comfort level in sharing together would take the pressure off individual meetings with the pastor. This approach would allow everyone involved to open up and reveal issues that could be addressed by the whole group.

The researcher wanted to develop a model that would allow the parents to see the relevance of sharing of God's Word in the home and to empower them with the

knowledge and confidence necessary to lead in this process. The researcher settled on a model that allowed her to utilize the materials currently at the disposal of the group members and one resource book that was used as a guide to empower parents. The researcher provided devotionals and study material for the parents and the children in the family structures present. The researcher decided to use this approach so that parents would use the materials they have at their disposal to impact families and to introduce other resources that might be of interest to the faith formation process in their home.

The next step was to clearly identify the methodological approach to be utilized in the project itself. A qualitative research method was chosen because the project fits the criteria outlined in the methodology book. According to Creswell, qualitative research must meet certain characteristics. These characteristics are natural setting, researcher as key instrument, multiple sources of data, inductive data analysis, participants' meaning, emergent design, theoretical lens, interpretive, and holistic account.[1] The researcher collected data and observed the participants in their natural settings. There were many face to face interactions over the course of the project. Secondly, the researcher was the key instrument in the project who examined and collected data, observed behavior, and interviewed the participants. The researcher collected data at the beginning, during the sessions, and at the conclusion of this project. Surveys were utilized in sessions I and VI.

The data collection was also gathered from a pre-project survey given to the entire church community and through the initial orientation of the project. There were three invitations given to the congregation to participate in this process. The focal group that evolved met for six sessions that included the orientation and personal interview phases.

[1] John W. Creswell, *Research Design : Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2009), 175-176.

Each empowerment session was opened with prayer, review from the lesson the week before, empowerment stories and introduction of the new material to be presented, followed by a closing prayer. All responses were recorded by the researcher. Data was also collected through researcher observation throughout the project.

The data was managed by the researcher and kept in a file for each participant. The researcher analyzed the data for each participant and encouraged interaction through formal and informal observation, faith sharing, and interviewing. The researcher also sought to discover participants' meaning in this project. Research helped to formulate opinions on faith formation, participants' understanding of the problem and the essence of the data gathered from the participants. The researcher began with a plan of action that was altered by the interaction of the group and the collection of data. For example, the researcher initially envisioned the collection of data through the collective discussion of the group with limited interaction. She envisioned a strict adherence to the lesson plan with little changes. However, as she entered the field, she discovered that particular mode of data collection was not applicable to the needs of the participants. The participants freely shared with a less structured lesson plan and benefitted from faith sharing from the group under the guidance of the Bible and the study book. The researcher had to welcome interaction and allow seasoned parents to pour wisdom into the younger parents in the study group. This shift allowed the researcher to collect more data and changed the setup of the empowerment settings from classroom to circle formation with everyone sitting together to share. The data will be measured from the outcomes of the pretest and post-test, patterns that emerge from the other sources of data.

This project was conducted in study sessions in which the hypothesis was generated. The researcher predicted that the participants understanding of their roles in the faith formation process of their children would improve between the pre and post survey. The researcher did not envision any decreases in values from the pretest to the post test for any participant. As a result of the project, parents would emerge from the project feeling more prepared and equipped with the tools to lead their families in faith formation exercises.

The researcher explored the parental relationships with the participants over a period of time. The various data collection procedures were sustained over a six weeks period and provided insight into the initial problem. The participants emerged from the congregation through persistent attendance during the pre-project phase and Bible studies. The data reporting and analyzing process for this project was divided into three sections. First, the project introduction phase which involved preparing the congregants for this ministry year with faith building exercises. Secondly, the focal group formation through introductions and personal interviews. Lastly, the researcher analyzed the entire project by examining the pre and post surveys of each parent. The researcher's final analysis will compare the original hypothesis to the conclusion gained from the data from the project.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

This project was designed to empower parents to become spiritual leaders in the home to raise children of faith at Gilmore Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church. The purpose of this project was to provide tools for parents to develop faith formation activities in the home and to empower parents to lead their families through knowledge and understanding of God's Word. There were six session total including the orientation and the closing session. Four of the sessions were termed "empowerment sessions" focusing on the material covered in the resource book, *Empowered Parent, Putting Faith First,* and the Holy Bible. The project was introduced to the congregation at the organizational meeting at the beginning of the 2012 annual conference year. The focus of the pre-project preparation and the actual fulfillment of the project was a combination of processes.

Pre-Project Preparation Process

As mentioned previously, the groundwork for this project began at the beginning of this ministry year after the researcher was re-appointed to Gilmore Chapel to begin her fourth year of ministry. The theme for the church was established by the researcher and focused on *Getting Back to the Basics.* The researcher reiterated the mission statement from the previous year adding the focus for this year which was faith formation. Each organization within the church was to formulate a mission statement that would encompass the same ministry focus as the church's mission statement. Many of the

organizations supported this request. The researcher encouraged the congregants to bring their Bibles to church every Sunday. The researcher takes a poll every Sunday to gauge the progress of this initiative and continues to encourage the members who have not started the process to do so with the rest of the members. The researchers purchased and autographed Bibles and presented them to the children during the Children's message one Sunday. For an entire month the children were given small gifts each Sunday they had their Bibles such as a book mark with the name of the books of the Bible listed, a note pad and pen for taking notes during the sermon, candy treats, and money.

Over the past two months, over two-thirds of the members bring their Bibles to church and take pride in assisting each other with finding the scripture reading. The ministerial staff provides instructions over the pulpit to those who are not use to reading the Bible or are not familiar with how to use the table of contents to find the text presented for a given Sunday. The reader of the scripture waits patiently until everyone has the scripture before reading. The congregation and the researcher are encouraged to see the interaction between family members and congregants, young adults and senior members, those who have finished school and those who struggle with reading and/or the process of change. One of the members, who kept her Bible in her pocketbook, purchased a Kindle to help her find the scriptures on Sunday morning. Bible software has been purchased for smart phones and tablets by some of the members.

The Bible Studies for this ministry year are centered on faith formation by walking through the Bible from beginning to end: from Genesis to Revelation. The researcher has tried to help the students understand the beginning of their faith. Each student has been given a notebook to take notes during the study and a folder to keep

handouts and homework. An extensive review of the previous lesson is given before each class and the researcher allows the members to ask questions and make statements as desired. The number of students in the class has grown and new students are coming to Bible Study this year for the first time. There is even a student from another A.M.E. Zion Church attending the Bible studies. The children and parents are coming together and are often intrigued when the Word of God becomes real. The walk through the Bible is lead by the researcher under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The researcher also encouraged the membership to attend Sunday school, particularly during the quarter that dealt with *A Living Faith.*[1] The researcher did a series of sermons from the *What Is Faith* series from this book. The topics were *Steadfast Determination, Steadfast Confidence, Steadfast Fortitude, Steadfast Thanks and Steadfast Love.* The sermon text each week came from the scriptural readings in the Sunday school book. The topics of the lessons were used as subtopics for the sermons. The sermon titles during this time were, *Steadfast Determination--I Feel Like Going On* Romans 5:1-5; *Steadfast Confidence--God Is With Us*, Hebrews 11:1-7; *Steadfast Fortitude--Prayer Still Works,* Hebrews 12:1-11; *Steadfast Thanks--I Will Give Thanks,* Hebrews 12:18-29; and *Steadfast Love--Love Never Fails*, I Corinthians 13. At the end of the worship service on September 30, 2012, the researcher held the first meeting with the congregation to introduce the project and to gauge the level of interest. There were 19 in attendance. The project was explained again in detail and the expectations from the researcher and the participants were also explained. The participants were then invited to the orientation session.

[1] The Young People-Adult Quarterly, First Quarter, September, October, and November (Printed by the A.M.E. Zion Publishing House)

The Ministry Project Process

The orientation session for the project was held with 11 parents representing the different family structures in the church in attendance. The researcher opened this session with scripture from Deuteronomy 6:1-9 and a prayer. The project name and focus was introduced to the participants. An orientation packet was given to each participant along with a notebook and a copy of the book, *Empowered Parents, Putting Faith First*. The group members were encouraged to bring the version of the Bible that was most comfortable for them to read. They all had their Bibles and were eager to get started. The contents of the orientation packet were reviewed slowly to give each participant a chance to ask questions or to make comments. The Consent to Release Information form was signed by all participants ensuring that only information that was pertinent to this project would be published without any identification information. Identities would be kept confidential.

This orientation packet was divided into six sections. The first sections gave the project overview along with supporting material from additional research. The overview stated the mission for the project and the expected outcome at the end of the sessions. Section II gave the participants a chance to define biblical parenting and to discuss their definitions and to review the definition given by the researcher. Section III, the participants answered the question: *Why should I engage in biblical parenting*? The scripture from the opening was reviewed in detail with questions and answers provided to the participants by the researcher to ensure their understanding of the project. Section IV,

answered the question, *When should I engage in biblical parenting?* Many of the participants agreed that it is a continuous process that will run throughout the course of their lives. Section V, addressed the question, *How do I become empowered to engage in biblical parenting?* The researcher further explained the importance of the Word of God in the empowerment process. She also explained the saying "knowledge is power" as a true statement because the more humans know the more they want to know. When knowledge is obtained, confidence follows which empowers one to act. Section VI listed the tools needed for the class. The researcher provided a detail overview of the book of focus for the project and explained to the group why she selected the book. The book was easy to read and provided twelve characteristics that should be present in the family and to introduce biblical principles to parents using the Word of God. Each section in the book is rich in stories and biblical concepts to help the families join the two together in their personal family settings. The book also included a study guide for the parents to share in personal devotion and family time at home. The book, the notebook, the orientation packet, and first empowerment session lesson were given to the participants. The last section and action for the night was the pre-survey assessment. The participants completed the survey and Greek letters were assigned to the individual surveys for identification protection.

The researcher then outlined the flow of the sessions that were to follow. Since the chapters were not lengthy, the researcher decided to cover three sections per night to keep the meeting down to six meeting total including the opening and closing. This was going to be crucial because many of the parents work varying shifts and had children at home to prepare for school the next day. Some of them lived 30 minutes away and others had jobs

that required them to be on the clock at 4:00 am. She outlined the topics for the session and also allowed two of the parents with teaching backgrounds to assist with the teaching of the classes. The session titles were as follows,

TABLE 1: Empowerment Sessions

Sessions	Topics
Empowerment Session #1	Empowering the Family with Unity and Embracing Uniqueness
Empowerment Session #2	Obedience, Forgiveness, and Spiritual Growth
Empowerment Session #3	Communication, Love, Hope and Persevere
Empowerment Session #4	Thankfulness, Priorities and Service

The researcher asked if the agenda was acceptable to all. They all agreed and committed to come to every session. The researcher promised to have meals prepared for them at her expense. She thanked everyone for coming and gave assignments for the next session with the homework questions coming from the study guides in the back of the books. The researcher asked that they also review Psalms 139 and be ready for discussion during the next session. The session ended with prayer.

Participants Background

Each of the participants in this doctoral study group is either a life-long members of Gilmore Chapel or a recent member within the past three years. These parents are very involved in the ministries of the church and supportive to the ministry of the researcher. They know each other very well and support the children of the church in any way possible. The following is a brief description of each parent and their pre-survey results.

Parent Alpha. This parent is a young adult female with a two year old daughter in the home. She has been married for less than 10 years to her husband who is of Jamaican decent. They reside in Charlotte, NC. She is a manager at a major clothing store in a mall

and her husband works third shift at a Youth Training facility in Concord. They are new parents and experience the joys, failures, and challenges of parenthood in the midst of diverse schedules. The female works with the youth ministries, missionary society, and sings in the adult choir when her work schedule will allow. The female is a life-long member of Gilmore Chapel.

Table 2: Parent Alpha Pre-Survey Results

	In this section, please rate the following statements:	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	Faith is very important in raising children.	1 X	2	3	4
2.	I am very knowledgeable about faith as it relates to the Bible.	1	2	3 X	4
3.	I engage in faith formation activities outside of Sunday morning and Bible study all of the time.	1	2	3 X	4
4.	My family is very involved in the ministry of the church.	1	2 X	3	4
5.	I do have family faith formation activities to include family devotion all of the time.	1	2	3 X	4
6.	I am very comfortable in leading my family in faith formation exercises.	1	2	3	4 X

Question: What do/did you hope these studies will/would do for you when it comes to leading your family in faith formation exercises?

Answers: No answer by the parent.

Parent Beta. This parent is a young adult female with one teenage and one pre-teenage daughter. She has been married for over ten years to her husband who works two jobs trying to take care of his family. She and her husband work varying shifts, therefore, the parental responsibility often rest on her shoulders. She works in a leadership capacity in a clothing store in the mall and her husband works out of town in South Carolina. She has been attending Gilmore for many years but recently joined under the leadership of the researcher. She is active in the choir, Christian Education ministries and the missionary society. Her children are very active in school and church with cheerleading, dance ministries, choir, and Christian education activities and make good grades in school.

Table 3: Parent Beta Pre-Survey Results

	In this section, please rate the following statements:	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	Faith is very important in raising children.	1 **X**	2	3	4
2.	I am very knowledgeable about faith as it relates to the Bible.	1	2 **X**	3	4
3.	I engage in faith formation activities outside of Sunday morning and Bible study all of the time.	1	2	3	4 **X**
4.	My family is very involved in the ministry of the church?	1 **X**	2	3	4
5.	I do have family faith formation activities to include family devotion all of the time.	1	2	3	4 **X**
6.	I am very comfortable in leading my family in faith formation exercises.	1 X	2	3	4

Question: What do/did you hope these studies will/would do for you when it comes to leading your family in faith formation exercises?

Answer: I am hoping to become more mature in my spiritual knowledge also increasing my knowledge of faith to share with my family and in my marriage.

Parent Gamma. This divorced young adult parent is a mother of two who is a life-long member of Gilmore Chapel. She is a recent graduate of Rowan Cabarrus Community College and works at a local child care facility and for Easter Seals. She is a hardworking female working two jobs with varying shifts trying to take care of her children. She has a teenage daughter and a young son. All of them are very active in the ministries of the church. She is a part of the adult dance ministry, choir, missionary society, Christian education and kitchen committee. Her daughter is a member of the choir, dance ministries, and youth activities sponsored by the Christian Education Department. Her son loves church and is a member of the mime ministry and the choir. He carries his tambourine to church every Sunday.

Table 4: Parent Gamma Pre-Survey Results

	In this section, please rate the following statements:	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	Faith is very important in raising children.	1 **X**	2	3	4
2.	I am very knowledgeable about faith as it relates to the Bible.	1	2 **X**	3	4
3.	I engage in faith formation activities outside of Sunday morning and Bible study all of the time.	1 **X**	2	3	4

4.	My family is very involved in the ministry of the church?	1 X	2	3	4
5.	I do have family faith formation activities to include family devotion all of the time.	1	2	3 X	4
6.	I am very comfortable in leading my family in faith formation exercises.	1	2 X	3	4

Question: What do/did you hope these studies will/would do for you when it comes to leading your family in faith formation exercises?

Answer: I am hoping to have a better understanding of God's Word.

Parent Delta. This young lady has never been married nor does she have any biological children of her own; however, she has raised and is still raising numerous children in her life time. She is a faithful life-long member of Gilmore Chapel who has two young adult children in the home who have been in and out of trouble. She has been the mother for numerous members of her family and is very precious to the researcher. She is very supportive of the ministries of the church and is active in everything that is under the Gilmore Chapel umbrella. She is even the head cheerleader for the GMC Warriors Basketball team. She is a steward, trustee, financial secretary, choir member, missionary, Christian Education chairperson, Pastor's aid president, Concord district and annual conference officer, and church secretary. She has had health challenges in the past but continues to move forward with her many activities. She has been employed on her job for over 30 years and is known all over the city for providing help to those who needed a job or assistance.

Table 5: Parent Delta Pre-Survey Results

	In this section, please rate the following statements:	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	Faith is very important in raising children.	1 X	2	3	4
2.	I am very knowledgeable about faith as it relates to the Bible.	1 X	2	3	4
3.	I engage in faith formation activities outside of Sunday morning and Bible study all of the time.	1 X	2	3	4
4.	My family is very involved in the ministry of the church?	1 X	2	3	4
5.	I do have family faith formation activities to include family devotion all of the time.	1	2	3 X	4
6.	I am very comfortable in leading my family in faith formation exercises.	1 X	2	3	4

Question: What do/did you hope these studies will/would do for you when it comes to leading your family in faith formation exercises?

Answer: Teenagers and young adults tend to go through a dropout period with regards to church attendance and involvement in faith-formation exercises. I hope these studies will help empower me to effectively bring this segment back into the church fold fully equipped to be a contributing member of the household of faith.

Parent Epsilon: This divorced parent has five adult children and several grandchildren that she continues to support emotionally, spiritually, and physical when she can. She is a retired worker who is a life-long member of Gilmore Chapel. She is

active in many of the ministries in the church and serves as chairperson of the trustee board, usher, and lay council as president. She is also a deaconess and missionary and she serves the Concord District as an usher and lay council officer. Her children lean on her heavily for support and guidance in life's challenges. She is very proud of her children and they are very proud of her.

Table 6: Parent Epsilon Pre-Project Survey

	In this section, please rate the following statements:	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	Faith is very important in raising children.	1 X	2	3	4
2.	I am very knowledgeable about faith as it relates to the Bible.	1	2 X	3	4
3.	I engage in faith formation activities outside of Sunday morning and Bible study all of the time. NO ANSWER	1	2	3	4
4.	My family is very involved in the ministry of the church?	1 X	2	3	4
5.	I do have family faith formation activities to include family devotion all of the time.	1 X	2	3	4
6.	I am very comfortable in leading my family in faith formation exercises.	1 X	2	3	4

Question: What do/did you hope these studies will/would do for you when it comes to leading your family in faith formation exercises?

Answer: I hope it will encourage them to come to church.

Parent Zeta: This divorced mother has a young adult son at home who recently graduated from college. She is also a life-long member of Gilmore Chapel and is active in every ministry in the church. She too is a cheerleader for the Gilmore Chapel Warrior Basketball Team. She is the Concord District Director of Christian Education, local missionary president, choir member, assistant preacher steward, Christian education worker, ministry of kindness chairperson, and serves on the deaconess board. She is also the Quarterly Conference secretary for the church. This young lady wears many hats but she loves her family very much. She is constantly praying for her son and does what she can to ensure his success.

Table 7: Parent Zeta Pre-Project Survey

	In this section, please rate the following statements:	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	Faith is very important in raising children.	1 X	2	3	4
2.	I am very knowledgeable about faith as it relates to the Bible.	1	2 X	3	4
3.	I engage in faith formation activities outside of Sunday morning and Bible study all of the time.	1 X	2	3	4
4.	My family is very involved in the ministry of the church?	1 X	2	3	4
5.	I do have family faith formation activities to include family devotion all of the time.	1	2 X	3	4
6.	I am very comfortable in leading my family in faith formation exercises.	1	2 X	3	4

Question: What do/did you hope these studies will/would do for you when it comes to leading your family in faith formation exercises?

Answer: These sessions will empower me to be less timid and more voiceful in teaching God's Word.

Parent Eta. This parent is the youngest parent of the group. She is a single parent residing in the house with the father of her pre-teen daughter. She works at one of the major marts as a cashier and does all she can to care for her child. She is also a life-long member of Gilmore and works with the children's choir and the GMC praise dance ministry. She has endured severe personal losses as her mother and father passed a week apart from each in the same year and her only brother is incarcerated. Her daughter appears to be struggling with depression and works hard at school and with church activities. She is a member of the GMC Praise Dance ministry and step team and the youth choir.

Table 8: Parent Eta Pre-Project Survey

	In this section, please rate the following statements:	**Strongly agree**	**Somewhat agree**	**Somewhat disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
1.	Faith is very important in raising children.	1 **X**	2	3	4
2.	I am very knowledgeable about faith as it relates to the Bible.	1 **X**	2	3	4
3.	I engage in faith formation activities outside of Sunday morning and Bible study all of the time.	1 **X**	2	3	4
4.	My family is very involved in the ministry of the church?	1 **X**	2	3	4

5.	I do have family faith formation activities to include family devotion all of the time.	1	2	3 X	4
6.	I am very comfortable in leading my family in faith formation exercises.	1 X	2	3	4

Question: What do/did you hope these studies will/would do for you when it comes to leading your family in faith formation exercises?

Answer: It will help me to be a good parent to be a good role model and to teach my child more about the Bible.

Parent Theta. This parent is a married parent of two adult children who live in the home. They relocated to Concord a few years ago after spending several years in New York. She and her husband are both retired and moved their entire family south to live. They are indeed a family of faith as God has blessed them richly since relocating to the city. She joined Gilmore Chapel under the leadership of the researcher two years ago and has been a tremendous asset to the church as a whole. She is active in many of the ministries of the church to include the choir, missionary society, deaconess and Christian Education department. She is a retired teacher who conducted the church's first annual Writer's Workshop. She is instrumental in the lives of the church and her family as she supports her daughter who has a young son in the home.

Table 9: Parent Theta Pre-Project Survey

	In this section, please rate the following statements:	**Strongly agree**	**Somewhat agree**	**Somewhat disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
1.	Faith is very important in raising children.	1 X	2	3	4

2.	I am very knowledgeable about faith as it relates to the Bible.	1	2 X	3	4
3.	I engage in faith formation activities outside of Sunday morning and Bible study all of the time.	1 X	2	3	4
4.	My family is very involved in the ministry of the church?	1 X	2	3	4
5.	I do have family faith formation activities to include family devotion all of the time.	1 X	2	3	4
6.	I am very comfortable in leading my family in faith formation exercises.	1 X	2	3	4

Question: What do you hope these studies will do for you when it comes to leading your family in faith formation exercises?

Answer: I am looking forward to increasing my biblical knowledge to study myself to be approved to share with my family (home and church).

Parent Iota. This parent has had many challenges in her personal life over the years. Because of finances and poor budget planning she has moved several times during the researcher's tenure at Gilmore Chapel. She has been a part of the ministerial staff at Gilmore Chapel for several years and is currently living in the house with her nephew. She is employed with the Charlotte Mecklenburg School System and is looking forward to retiring soon. She is very active in the ministry at the church. She is a member of the adult dance ministry and the choir. She also assists with the preparation of food when needed. Her children are all self-sufficient but value their relationship with their mother.

Table 10: Parent Iota Pre-Project Survey

	In this section, please rate the following statements:	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	Faith is very important in raising children.	1 X	2	3	4
2.	I am very knowledgeable about faith as it relates to the Bible.	1	2	3 X	4
3.	I engage in faith formation activities outside of Sunday morning and Bible study all of the time.	1 X	2	3	4
4.	My family is very involved in the ministry of the church?	1 X	2	3	4
5.	I do have family faith formation activities to include family devotion all of the time.	1 X	2	3	4
6.	I am very comfortable in leading my family in faith formation exercises.	1 X	2	3	4

Question: What do/did you hope these studies will/would do for you when it comes to leading your family in faith formation exercises?

Answer: I hope this will help me with study and teaching with more children.

Parent Kappa. This parent is the only male in the study group. He is the husband of parent Theta and they have been a value to the members at Gilmore since their arrival. He is retired He is active with the men's ministry, sings in the male chorus, and serves on the trustee board of the church. He and his wife have been married for over forty years and have the blessing of two adult children in the home by choice. He is a soft spoken

individual who helps wherever needed. You will find him cleaning the church, taking out trash in the kitchen during food sales, and even with an apron assisting the men with food sales. They moved from New York looking for a safer life for the entire family. They are treasured by their children and the church.

Table 11: Parent Kappa Pre-Project Survey

	In this section, please rate the following statements:	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	Faith is very important in raising children.	1 X	2	3	4
2.	I am very knowledgeable about faith as it relates to the Bible.	1	2 X	3	4
3.	I engage in faith formation activities outside of Sunday morning and Bible study all of the time.	1 X	2	3	4
4.	My family is very involved in the ministry of the church?	1	2 X	3	4
5.	I do have family faith formation activities to include family devotion all of the time.	1	2	3 X	4
6.	I am very comfortable in leading my family in faith formation exercises.	1 X	2	3	4

Question: What do/did you hope these studies will/would do for you when it comes to leading your family in faith formation exercises?

Answer: This should inform me with more knowledge about the Bible that I will know what I am talking about.

Parent Lambda. This parent is a single mother of two children and is a life-long member of Gilmore Chapel. She is active in several ministries of the church to include; kitchen committee chairperson, dance ministry coordinator, youth praise and step team coordinator, missionary, and adult dance ministry and van ministry. She has the challenge of raising her children and other family members that reside in the house with them. She is a valuable member of the church and works hard to support her children. She is employed at a local company in the city. She is soft spoken at times but works hard to ensure the church has what it needs in order to survive.

Table 12: Parent Lambda Pre-Project Survey

	In this section, please rate the following statements:	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	Faith is very important in raising children.	1 X	2	3	4
2.	I am very knowledgeable about faith as it relates to the Bible.	1	2 X	3	4
3.	I engage in faith formation activities outside of Sunday morning and Bible study all of the time.	1 X	2	3	4
4.	My family is very involved in the ministry of the church?	1 X	2	3	4
5.	I do have family faith formation activities to include family devotion all of the time.	1 X	2	3	4
6.	I am very comfortable in leading my family in faith formation exercises.	1 X	2	3	4

Question: What do/did you hope these studies will/would do for you when it comes to leading your family in faith formation exercises?

Answer: That I would understand the Bible better. I would be able to communicate more with my children and make sure they get a better understanding from me and they would grow from the Bible.

Empowerment Session #1: Empowering the Family with Unity and Embracing Uniqueness

This session began promptly at 7:00 pm with the singing of a verse of *Blessed Assurance Jesus is Mine* and the reading of the scripture of focus for the night, Psalms 139. Prayer was offered by the researcher. The meal for the night was being prepared and delivered to the participants on a per order basis. The researcher continued with the lesson for the evening and began by asking the parents, "What does it mean to be empowered?" Several answers emerged from the group. The discussion continued by looking at empowerment as it related to the Bible. The researcher went over several empowerment scriptures particularly, Act 1:8 and Luke 10:19-20. The participants confessed that they were saved and discussed that experience and how they felt at that moment. The researcher tied the feeling into the lesson and assured them that God has given them his Spirit at salvation which empowered them for the task at hand. The key was to get them to realize that they had the tools needed for spiritual leadership in the home through this empowerment moment.

The discussion then turned to the home front. The researcher continued to teach from the Bible and the resource book dealing with biblical characteristics that should exist in the home. Since each participant admitted to being a Christian, it was pertinent to deal with their roles in ensuring that the family atmosphere was conducive for learning

and faith transfer. The group discussed ways to unite the family by embracing the uniqueness in each child. Psalms 139 was the scripture of focus as the class reflected on their own diversity and the characteristics they bring to the Body of Christ. Each identified the unique characteristics in their children and discussed ways that this uniqueness would be a blessing to God. This discussion was rich and full of interaction between the parents as each identified characteristics in each other and the children that the parent talking did not recognize. It helped them to see how others in the church perceived their families in a positive light. This alone empowered many of the parents because they were able to see their parenting styles in action. At the end of the discussion, the homework assignment for the next session was given and the scripture of study, which was Psalms 51. The researcher asked each participant to write a mission statement for their families. The session ended with prayer.

Empowerment Session #2: Obedience, Forgiveness, and Spiritual Growth

The second empowerment session opened with the singing of a verse of *Pass Me Not O Gentle Savior,* scripture from Psalms 51:1-10 and prayer by the researcher. The meal for the evening was served. The researcher reviewed the session from last week and again brainstormed the definition of empowerment. The researcher reviewed the homework in regards to the mission statements. The statements were shared by the participants who also welcomed discussion and feedback from other parents. The discussion was rich and the parents made corrections that they felt were needed. The researcher asked them to share the statements with the family members to get their feedback and understanding. The researcher proceeded to the lessons of focus for this session by reviewing Psalms 51. The parents shared the correlation between obedience

and forgiveness. Parent Theta and Parent Iota shared their experiences with the subject matter with the other parents encouraging them to be obedient to God first when instructing their children and cautions between setting double standards for the home. The parents discussed their roles when it comes to establishing rules for the home and to be carful not to break them in order to set a good example for their children.

All of the parents and the researcher agreed that spiritual growth is a process just like parenting. The researcher shared with the parents their responsibility to ensure that spiritual growth is occurring in the home. Family fellowship through Bible study or sharing is crucial to this process. There were several ways that the researcher stated this could happen outside of the worship experience on Sundays and Wednesday night Bible Study. Some examples were videos, movies, game or movie night, family study and family outings. The parents shared stories from the book of study they enjoyed that related to the lesson and expounded on issues of importance in the home that tied in to these stories. The researcher enjoyed the discussion. At the conclusion of this session, the researcher introduced the parent facilitator for the next group and gave the homework assignment. The parents were to go home and share their mission statements with their children and allow them to give feedback and make necessary changes. The scripture of focus for the next session was I Corinthians 13. The meeting ended with prayer.

Empowerment Session #3: Communication, Love, Hope and Persevere

This session opened with a verse of *What a Fellowship What a Joy Divine* and a scripture from I Corinthians 13. Prayer was given by the researcher. The session opened with review from the previous two sessions and the definition of empowerment. The revised mission statements were shared by the parents as they discussed the experiences

they encountered with their children. Overall, the children appeared to be receptive to the idea of faith sharing and fellowship in the home. The parents that had grown children out of the home, shared their experience with the difficulty of trying to do this for themselves and to set standards on which they will be governed in their home and all who enter. The facilitator was introduced who utilized the book and the Bible heavily to do her presentation. *Parent Gamma* did an excellent job teaching and engaging the parents in discussion.

The facilitator stressed the need for open communication between parent and child and for the parent to show love and support as often as they can. She shared the stories from the book that allowed the parents to see themselves and to reminisce on actions they took to resolve similar situations. The facilitator also told the parents to offer them hope instead of disappointment when they face difficult situations. Children will learn how to endure through the endurance of the parent. If the parent gives up the child will be prone to have the same reaction. The scripture of focus was discussed concerning love. The facilitator reminded the parents that none of this will be accomplished in the life of the child if it is not done through the parent with love. The researcher thanked *Parent Gamma* for teaching the class and provided a summary of the information given for the lesson of focus. Final discussion was given and the homework assignment was given by the researcher. The scripture of focus for the last empowerment session was Romans 12. The session ended with a prayer by the parent.

Empowerment Session #4: Thankfulness, Priorities and Service

This session opened with a song, *What a Mighty God We Serve*, the scripture was taken from Romans 12:1-12, and a prayer given by the researcher. The meal for the

evening was served. The researcher reviewed the lessons from the previous sessions and asked again about the definition of empowerment. The researcher asked for final copies of the mission statement to be framed and presented to each participant at the conclusion of this project. Before the session, the researcher purchased devotionals, study books, and inspirational sayings for each participant in the class. She also purchased devotionals for each child still in the home who was under the age of 18. Each participant had a stack of books to take home with them given from the heart of the researcher. She talked to each parent to explain the selection of books that were chosen for that particular family. *Parent Iota* purchased books on the book of Genesis for each parent as well. This was an example of an empowered parent helping to empower younger parents through the process of parenting.

The scripture for the evening was reviewed by the researcher which brought the theme of service and setting priorities in to focus. The facilitator for the evening, *Parent Theta* took over and continued with the discussion. She referenced the book used for this project and the scriptures in the chapters of focus. She also used the questions from the study guide to spark further discussion. She talked about realigning priorities to put children first and gave examples or excerpts from the book that made the parents reflect on things that they had unintentionally put before their children. This discussion was emotional for all of the parents and many shed tears because of the way it made them feel. Parents begin to open up about issues in their personal lives that haunted them from childhood that spilled over into how they react to their children. The scripture from Romans was powerful and fueled the discussion because it reminded parents not to think more highly of yourself than you should. One parent admitted that she often hollers at her

child due to frustrations she experienced in her childhood and personal relationships. She was crushed when her child asked her to stop before the session.

The beauty of the project was to see how the other parents in the group empowered this parent who became transparent in their midst. She was looking for help and the parents rushed to her aid with encouraging words and the Word of God. The researcher observed the interaction that occurred with little input. The parent in distress was encouraged by the support that was given by the group. All of this was in line with the topic of discussion for that night. Many of the parents had complained to the researcher about the way this particular parent was interacting with her daughter in their midst. They had tried to encourage her to stop hollering at her daughter but to no avail. It was not until the daughter said something that conviction occurred.

The facilitator made final comments regarding her topic of discussion and applauded the parents for ensuring that their children were active in some capacity in church. The researcher thanked the facilitator for an excellent job teaching and gave a summary over the life of the sessions. She gave each parent a charge to move forward in parenting as spiritual leaders in the home to facilitate the flow of faith from one child to another. The researcher also thanked everyone for their attendance and her husband for providing the meals. She dismissed with prayer.

Recapitulation of the Project: Feedback Meeting

The post-project surveys were distributed at the exit interview meeting with the parents. The parents provided valuable feedback to the strengths and weaknesses of the project and shared empowerment stories from members in the church that were not a part of the project and from the parents and the children who were directly or indirectly

involved with the project. The following is the data collected from the pre and post survey to measure the growth of the parent. **(PR = pre survey, PS post survey)**

Table 13: Parent Alpha Pre vs. Post Project Survey

	In this section, please rate the following statements:	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	Faith is very important in raising children.	1 **X (PR)** **X (PS)**	2	3	4
2.	I am very knowledgeable about faith as it relates to the Bible.	1	2 **X(PS)**	3 **X(PR)**	4
3.	I engage in faith formation activities outside of Sunday morning and Bible study all of the time.	1 **X (PS)**	2	3 **X(PR)**	4
4.	My family is very involved in the ministry of the church?	1 **X(PS)**	2 **X(PR)**	3	4
5.	I do have family faith formation activities to include family devotion all of the time.	1 **X(PS)**	2	3 **X(PR)**	4
6.	I am very comfortable in leading my family in faith formation exercises.	1	2 **X(PS)**	3	4 **X(PR)**

Question: What do/did you hope these studies will/would do for you when it comes to leading your family in faith formation exercises?

Answer (PR): No answer by the parent.

Answer (PS): I found the workshop to be extremely informative and helpful! The instructor was knowledgeable about the material, it was easy to understand the instructor's teaching. Being a "new" mom, I feel enlighten and I am happy I was selected to be a part of the workshop.

Table 14: Parent Beta Pre vs. Post Project Survey

	In this section, please rate the following statements:	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	Faith is very important in raising children.	1 **X(PR) X(PS)**	2	3	4
2.	I am very knowledgeable about faith as it relates to the Bible.	1	2 **X(PR) X(PS)**	3	4
3.	I engage in faith formation activities outside of Sunday morning and Bible study all of the time.	1	2 **X(PS)**	3	4 **X(PR)**
4.	My family is very involved in the ministry of the church?	1 **X(PR) X(PS)**	2	3	4
5.	I do have family faith formation activities to include family devotion all of the time.	1	2	3 **X(PS)**	4 **X(PR)**
6.	I am very comfortable in leading my family in faith formation exercises.	1 **X(PR)**	2 **X(PS)**	3	4

Question: What do/did you hope these studies will/would do for you when it comes to leading your family in faith formation exercises?

Answer (PR): I am hoping to become more mature in my spiritual knowledge also increasing my knowledge of faith to share with my family and in my marriage.

Answer (PS): I have enjoyed being a part of this study. It was a very informative study.

Table 15: Parent Gamma Pre vs. Post Project Survey

	In this section, please rate the following statements:	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	Faith is very important in raising children.	1 **X(PR)** **X(PS)**	2	3	4
2.	I am very knowledgeable about faith as it relates to the Bible.	1 **X(PS)**	2 **X(PR)**	3	4
3.	I engage in faith formation activities outside of Sunday morning and Bible study all of the time.	1 **X(PR)** **X(PS)**	2	3	4
4.	My family is very involved in the ministry of the church?	1 **X(PR)** **X(PS)**	2	3	4
5.	I do have family faith formation activities to include family devotion all of the time.	1 **X(PS)**	2	3 **X(PR)**	4
6.	I am very comfortable in leading my family in faith formation exercises.	1 **X(PS)**	2 **X(PR)**	3	4

Question: What do/did you hope these studies will/would do for you when it comes to leading your family in faith formation exercises?

Answer (PR): I am hoping to have a better understanding of God's Word.

Answer (PS): I feel the class was a blessing to me and how I will raise my children. I do wish it was a little longer.

Table 16: Parent Delta Pre vs. Post Project Survey

	In this section, please rate the following statements:	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	Faith is very important in raising children.	1 **X(PR)** **X(PS)**	2	3	4
2.	I am very knowledgeable about faith as it relates to the Bible.	1 **X(PR)** **X(PS)**	2	3	4
3.	I engage in faith formation activities outside of Sunday morning and Bible study all of the time.	1 **X(PR)** **X(PS)**	2	3	4
4.	My family is very involved in the ministry of the church?	1 **X(PR)** **X(PS)**	2	3	4
5.	I do have family faith formation activities to include family devotion all of the time.	1 **X(PS)**	2	3 **X(PR)**	4
6.	I am very comfortable in leading my family in faith formation exercises.	1 **X(PR)** **X(PS)**	2	3	4

Question: What do/did you hope these studies will/would do for you when it comes to leading your family in faith formation exercises?

Answer (PR): Teenagers and young adults tend to go through a dropout period with regard to church attendance and involvement in faith formation exercises. I hope these studies will help empower me to effectively bring this segment back into the church fold fully equipped to be a contributing member of the household of faith.

Answer (PS): The studies were very informative and engaging. I feel that I have been more empowered to work with parents with small children, and to be more effective in regaining teenagers and young adults who have been spiritually nurtured but are experiencing a dropout period.

Table 17: Parent Epsilon Pre vs. Post Project Survey

	In this section, please rate the following statements:	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	Faith is very important in raising children.	1 **X(PR) X(PS)**	2	3	4
2.	I am very knowledgeable about faith as it relates to the Bible.	1	2 **X (PR) X(PS)**	3	4
3.	I engage in faith formation activities outside of Sunday morning and Bible study all of the time.	1 **X(PR) X (PS)**	2	3	4
4.	My family is very involved in the ministry of the church?	1 **X (PR) X (PS)**	2	3	4
5.	I do have family faith formation activities to include family devotion all of the time.	1 **X (PR) X (PS)**	2	3	4
6.	I am very comfortable in leading my family in faith formation exercises.	1 **X (PR) X (PS)**	2	3	4

Question: What do/did you hope these studies will/would do for you when it comes to leading your family in faith formation exercises?

Answer (PR): That I would understand the Bible better. I would be able to communicate more with my children and make sure they get a better understanding from me and they would grow from the Bible.

Answer (PS): These studies are very helpful. I wish it was here when I was raising my kids. I enjoyed the class very much.

Table 18: Parent Zeta Pre vs. Post Project Survey

	In this section, please rate the following statements:	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	Faith is very important in raising children.	1 **X(PR)** **X (PR)**	2	3	4
2.	I am very knowledgeable about faith as it relates to the Bible.	1 **X (PS)**	2 **X(PR)**	3	4
3.	I engage in faith formation activities outside of Sunday morning and Bible study all of the time.	1 **X(PR)** **X(PS)**	2	3	4
4.	My family is very involved in the ministry of the church?	1 **X(PR)** **X(PS)**	2	3	4
5.	I do have family faith formation activities to include family devotion all of the time.	1 **X(PS)**	2 **X(PR)**	3	4
6.	I am very comfortable in leading my family in faith formation exercises.	1 **X(PS)**	2 **X(PR)**	3	4

Question: What do/did you hope these studies will/would do for you when it comes to leading your family in faith formation exercises?

Answer (PR): That I would understand the Bible better. I would be able to communicate more with my children and make sure they get a better understanding from me and they would grow from the Bible.

Answer (PS): Being in this study, I have gained a sense of confidence in praying and having faith family discussion and I'm a lot at ease when we talk. I've learned to listen so much better than I have been.

Table 19: Parent Eta Pre vs. Post Project Survey

	In this section, please rate the following statements:	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	Faith is very important in raising children.	1 **X(PR) X(PS)**	2	3	4
2.	I am very knowledgeable about faith as it relates to the Bible.	1 **X(PR) X(PS)**	2	3	4
3.	I engage in faith formation activities outside of Sunday morning and Bible study all of the time.	1 **X(PR) X(PS)**	2	3	4
4.	My family is very involved in the ministry of the church?	1 **X(PR) X(PS)**	2	3	4
5.	I do have family faith formation activities to include family devotion all of the time.	1 **X(PS)**	2	3 **X(PR)**	4
6.	I am very comfortable in leading my family in faith formation exercises.	1 **X(PR) X(PS)**	2	3	4

Question: What do/did you hope these studies will/would do for you when it comes to leading your family in faith formation exercises?

Answer (PR): It will help me to be a good parent to be a good role model and to teach my child more about the Bible.

Answer (PS): This study helped me out a lot and I learned a lot from it. It lets me see where I am as a parent and what to do as a parent and for me to be a good parent and for my daughter to be a good model as she gets older. I thank God that I am able to pray and seek him for whatever I need.

Table 20: Parent Theta Pre vs. Post Project Survey

	In this section, please rate the following statements:	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	Faith is very important in raising children.	1 **X(PR)** **X(PS)**	2	3	4
2.	I amvery knowledgeable about faith as it relates to the Bible.	1 **X(PS)**	2 **X(PR)**	3	4
3.	I engage in faith formation activities outside of Sunday morning and Bible study all of the time.	1 **X(PR)** **X(PS)**	2	3	4
4.	My family is very involved in the ministry of the church?	1 **X(PR)** **X(PS)**	2	3	4
5.	I do have family faith formation activities to include family devotion all of the time.	1 **X(PR)** **X(PS)**	2	3	4
6.	I am very comfortable in leading my family in faith formation exercises.	1 **X(PR)** **X(PS)**	2	3	4

Question: What do/did you hope these studies will/would do for you when it comes to leading your family in faith formation exercises?

Answer (PR): I am looking forward to increasing my biblical knowledge; to study myself to be approved to share with my family (home and church).

Answer (PS): I hope and pray that I can get my daughter and grandson to attend church on a regular basis. I feel armed with the Word!

Table 21: Parent Iota Pre vs. Post Project Survey

	In this section, please rate the following statements:	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	Faith is very important in raising children.	1 **X(PR)** **X(PS)**	2	3	4
2.	I am very knowledgeable about faith as it relates to the Bible.	1 **X(PS)**	2	3 **X(PR)**	4
3.	I engage in faith formation activities outside of Sunday morning and Bible study all of the time.	1 **X(PR)** **X(PS)**	2	3	4
4.	My family is very involved in the ministry of the church?	1 **X(PR)** **X(PS)**	2	3	4
5.	I do have family faith formation activities to include family devotion all of the time.	1 **X(PR)** **X(PS)**	2	3	4
6.	I am very comfortable in leading my family in faith formation exercises.	1 **X(PR)** **X(PS)**	2	3	4

Question: What do/did you hope these studies will/would do for you when it comes to leading your family in faith formation exercises?

Answer (PR): To help me with study and teach more children.

Answer (PS): These studies will help me in and on my job working with children. I know that we need to treat everyone as much as possible the same.

Table 22: Parent Kappa Pre vs. Post Project Survey

	In this section, please rate the following statements:	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	Faith is very important in raising children.	1 **X(PR) X(PS)**	2	3	4
2.	I am very knowledgeable about faith as it relates to the Bible.	1	2 **X(PR) X(PS)**	3	4
3.	I engage in faith formation activities outside of Sunday morning and Bible study all of the time.	1 **X(PR) X(PS)**	2	3	4
4.	My family is very involved in the ministry of the church?	1	2 **X(PR) X(PS)**	3	4
5.	I do have family faith formation activities to include family devotion all of the time.	1	2	3 **X(PR) X(PS)**	4
6.	I am very comfortable in leading my family in faith formation exercises.	1 **X(PR) X(PS)**	2	3	4

Question: What do/did you hope these studies will/would do for you when it comes to leading your family in faith formation exercises?

Answer (PR): Inform me with more knowledge about the Bible that I will know what I am talking about.

Answer (PS): Understanding our children better and listen to them first before judging what they are saying. Being a part of this class is rewarding, it made my understanding or how important it is to have faith in the household.

Table 23: Parent Lambda Pre vs. Post Project Survey

	In this section, please rate the following statements:	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	Faith is very important in raising children.	1 **X(PR)** **X(PS)**	2	3	4
2.	I am very knowledgeable about faith as it relates to the Bible.	1 **X(PS)**	2 **X(PR)**	3	4
3.	I engage in faith formation activities outside of Sunday morning and Bible study all of the time.	1 **X(PR)** **X(PS)**	2	3	4
4.	My family is very involved in the ministry of the church?	1 **X(PR)** **X(PS)**	2	3	4
5.	I do have family faith formation activities to include family devotion all of the time.	1 **X(PR)** **X(PS)**	2	3	4
6.	I am very comfortable in leading my family in faith formation exercises.	1 **X(PR)** **X(PS)**	2	3	4

Question: What do/did you hope these studies will/would do for you when it comes to leading your family in faith formation exercises?

Answer (PR): That I would understand the Bible better. I would be able to communicate more with my children and make sure they get a better understanding from me, and they would grow from the Bible.

Answer (PS): This was a blessing for me and my daughter. She is reading the book with me. My niece is ready to read it.

Field Experience Conclusion

The researcher's original hypothesis was that parents would emerge from this project empowered to become spiritual leaders in the home to facilitate the flow of faith from parent to child by sharing the Word of God. From the data collected, every parent experienced some type of spiritual growth during this process and became better prepared to facilitate faith transfer in the home. The researcher was happy to see the dedication from the parents as many of them were coming to the sessions from work or after dropping off or picking up children from cheerleading practice and other events in the schools. The researcher was empowered to share from her resources by providing additional study material and food for every meal. In return, the participants were able to concentrate and engage in meaningful conversations. The study group was very diverse making the data gained from observations and conversations between the parents valuable. The backgrounds and knowledge levels were diverse in regards to age, educational level, and family makeup. Despite the potential barrier, the parents and the researcher accomplished every task while learning more about God in the process. The researcher believes the most empowering moment for the parents was the formulation of the mission statement. Everyone in the house had to look at it and make changes so that it would be a family event instead of rules enforced by one parent. The researcher was

pleased with the process and will present the mission statements to each parent in a designer frame during a worship service.

The diversity of parenting skills and the family dynamics of the parents help the researcher deduce that the growth of this project came from the manner in which the resources where shared and group interactions. According to observation and the data collected, the parents all received valuable knowledge and resource materials to support their faith development in the home. Some of them have utilized this material to communicate more with their children during family sharing moments that were absent before this project.

The researcher believes this empowerment project was a success. While each parent utilizes different parenting skills and family makeup, the data suggested that the material presented was enough to meet their needs concerning the subject matter. In some respect, every parent was better equipped with the tools to lead faith formation in the home. The researcher contends that this project was designed as an introduction to other faith formation projects and activities in the future.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTION, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION

> Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message. The message is heard through Jesus Christ. [1]

This project was to empower parents to lead spiritually in the home at the Gilmore Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church. The data reflected that the resources provided accomplished the goal of providing parents with knowledge and guidance to set up faith formation activities outside of the church. While the project was a success, the researcher learned many things in the course of this project both from participant feedback and researcher observation. These observations have caused the researcher to grow and to discern where improvements in the model can be made. First, the researcher learned that a project of this type and nature needs to be longer. With all the demands on parents and children from school, church, community and social activities, parents need more time to develop structures at home that will allow them to work around schedules and jobs to facilitate faith activities. The thrust of this project deals with processes which take time to implement and oversee by the leader. This project was designed to fit the requirement; however, in the future this model needs to be expanded to allow more time for reflection, discussion, and implementation of the tools the parents acquired from the researcher and others who were empowered to provide.

Next, the researcher learned that while the group dynamic was important, parents would have benefitted from one-on-one time with the researcher to provide specific

[1] Romans 10:17.

resources for needs too delicate to discuss in the group. This should be accomplished with the ministerial representative and the parent or with the ministerial representative and the family. This will allow more personal interaction between all of the people in particular family structures. Parents and children needed to have guided conversations with a mutual person in the room that will listen to all sides of issues and provide a voice of reason so that unresolved issues can come to the forefront before or during the faith formation process. The family needs to have more interaction with the spiritual leader so they will not feel like they are left alone during this process. The leader should become a mentor for the spiritual leader to continue to share resources and ideas under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The success of this type of relationship is the parent and child willingness to be open to direction, guidance, and spiritual directions.

Another concept that the researcher learned throughout this project is that faith development is a life-long covenant relationship between all parties involved including Jesus Christ. Salvation is a process, empowerment is a process, faith formation is a process, and parenting is a process that involves relationships and changes. The real success of this project will be determined through the implementation. The knowledge that is obtained has to be transmitted to the family so the fullness of the process can be measured. In all of the exit interviews the researcher conducted, the only weakness indicated by the parents was time. They wanted more session and more time taken to have the necessary guidance through practical application of their faith activities. While the researcher agrees, this action can still be applied post project with a commitment between the ministering agent, the parent, and the children. The key will be to do something with the knowledge obtained.

Another concept that emerged from the project was the need for family assessments before implementing faith activities. Since faith formation is a process, every member of the family will be impacted. Parents should take an assessment of some type to see the interest and learning avenues that work best for every member. The resource book used for this project encouraged parents to embrace the uniqueness in every member of the family. Faith cannot be do-it-my way or else. It involves open communication and input. If the parent can capture the attention of the family while offering diverse methods of learning, the impact will be significant. Some children are visual learners, some learn through listening, music, reading, or through spoken words. The challenge of the parent is to identify the learning styles and the avenues of interest and create faith formation exercises that will meet the needs. Parents should not try to model their families after other families. What works for the neighbor may not be the most effective way to operate in another parent's family. Faith activities have to be specific and intentional. The mission is to transfer faith through sharing, teaching, and Christian fellowship. Again, uniqueness and diversity have to be embraced to get the best results for each family.

The last concept that emerged from this project is the researcher's awareness of the different empowerment activities that transpired before the project. The researcher stated that at the beginning of the annual conference year for the A.M.E. Zion Church, the researcher was intentional about faith formation and knowledge. Through the series of preaching and other faith activities instituted by the researcher, the following faith activities have emerged.

1. The Men's ministry has undergirded the mission of the church has and have been instrumental in sponsoring fund-raisers, becoming a part of the Warriors of Praise Mime Ministry, and basketball programs.

2. The outreach ministry has embraced the vision of two children through a gift to the community by feeding the homeless at least once a quarter.
3. One of the Children's Church leaders passed out faith mustard seed necklaces to all of the children after the message on faith.
4. A young family, who have been attending the church for months have donated food and cooked meals for all of the fundraisers and the homeless feedings.
5. The resurgence of the choir with returning members from a previous fallout is in process.
6. A local grant foundation called the researcher to ask her to apply for grant money for the repairs of the church. Usually the churches make the contact. God's favor has been with the church because the grant foundation awarded the church $15.000.
7. Bible study has an average attendance of about twenty students.

The highlight of any faith formation process is the family member making a commitment to accept the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ into their heart. The researcher's seventeen year old daughter came forward to give her life to the Lord. This is indeed successful faith transfer in action. An empowered parent is very happy because of the example that had been set before this child has been realized now through her faith.

The researcher is excited and disappointed at the same time. Excited that the project was well received by the participants and disappointed that the time allotted was not long enough. The researcher was listening to the voice of the parents before the project as it related to their schedules and tried to be as accommodating as possible by offering meals and materials for them to use as resources in the home. Once the sessions started the parent's schedules relaxed as they made the sessions a priority. They were excited and empowered demonstrated by contacting each other during the day to discuss homework assignments and issues from the book. The researcher was excited because the parents were excited. The researcher's husband was excited because it gave him an opportunity to make delicious home cooked meals. The parents found strength in each other and enjoyed hearing the successes and failures of parenthood from the older participants.

During the exit interview, the parents overall shared how this experience was a blessing and how they are able to make changes in their behavior that will foster trust in the parent/child relationship. The characteristics of love, trust, obedience, open communication, and spiritual discernment that were mentioned in the resource book made an impact in the ways parents communicated with their children. Some of them stated that they have started listening before acting and have incorporated more prayer and Bible reading in their routines. There were members who were not involved with this project but had an interest in some of the materials used for this project. The parents shared some their resources with them and were there to answer questions and offer support in any way possible. This group was empowered and the congregants were able to see a difference week after week. In order for this to happen the researcher encouraged them to activate the power within and lead from their spiritual center.

Finally, the researcher was transformed as a result of this project. Her own understanding of faith has changed, which will aid her in further faith development for her family as her daughter prepares to leaves for college in a few months. The researcher now understands that marriage is a life-long learning and growing process, forged through trial and error. The researcher understands now that faith development is unique and specific to each family. It is a life-long process that continues throughout the course of life. She has become more disciplined and intentional in faith transmission among the congregants in the church and has become more sensitive to children and parents who are struggling to unite. The researcher now has learned to look at ministry through God's eyes in order to see God's work at hand in the congregation and understand that as the leader of the flock, faith formation is not restrictive to the researcher's home but to the

church home as well. To lead is to have faith and to have faith is to empower. To empower others is to share the Word of God according to the needs of the family, church, and community.

APPENDIX A

Orientation Handout

EMPOWERING PARENTS TO BECOME SPIRITUAL LEADERS IN THE HOME TO RAISE CHILDREN OF FAITH

ORIENTATION PACKET

Purpose

To encourage parents to become spiritual leaders in the home in order to facilitate effective faith development in the life of their children through the Study of God's Word.

United Theological Seminary

The Purpose of the Doctor of Ministry Degree

The Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) program at United Theological Seminary (UTS) is an advanced professional degree program in the practice of ministry. In this program, religious leaders guide the development of new models of ministry in which both ministers and ministry contexts are transformed. The program's Action Research Methods foster spiritual and intellectual synthesis while strengthening prophetic and pastoral competence.

In this contextual mode of learning, each student engages in a collaborative approach to self-directed learning and critical reflection through participation in a Peer Group, guided by a Faculty Mentor. After studying the context of ministry and its ministry needs, each participant works with persons from the ministry context, peers, the Faculty Mentor and professional associates to design a replicable model of ministry to address a specific need within the context. All projects must be action oriented with the objective of producing measurable change within the ministry context.

The student spends five days each semester on the UTS campus and two sessions, 32 contact hours each semester, with the Peer Group. The program utilizes distance education to maximize communications and to minimize the need for travel.

Project Overview

The main thrust of this doctoral project is to empower parents to become spiritual leaders in the home in order to raise children of faith. Historically, parents have depended solely on the church to develop faith for the family through Sunday morning worship or Vacation Bible schools. Ryan Wolfe, Pastor of First Christian Church in Canton Ohio states, "Today's parents have outsourced the spiritual development of their children.

Many of them want to lead their children spiritually but they don't know how. So they hand off that responsibility to children's ministries and youth ministries at the church."[1]

Many parents have a fear of failure or feel their knowledge base is inadequate to engage in faith-formation activities at home. The premise of this project is to encourage parents, with the aid of the church, to become spiritual leaders in the home through the sharing and teaching of God's Word through fellowship, prayer, and impartation.

At the conclusion of this project, it is the hope of the researcher to have parents excited about leading their families in the study of God's Word with prayer and fellowship. Corporate worship and Sunday school are avenues that have been established for a purpose and that is assist with faith formation for all generations. Parents do not have re-invent the wheel, they can build their family devotions and prayer around the material that is taught in study and preached across the pulpit on Sunday mornings. It is the researchers hope to get the parents comfortable in talking and teaching Bible stories and studies with their children. The researcher will incorporate other tools as need to ensure the success of this project. It is hopeful that every parent will embrace faith formation and continue to come to church and to work faithfully to ensure that their children have the biblical foundation need to strength their belief in God and to increase their knowledge base so that they will have developed Christian values for the future.

II. What is Biblical Parenting?

- Write Your Own Definition:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

- Biblical Parenting is raising children in the faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is intentionally sharing the Word of God through study, daily living and life experiences that will shape their perceptions and values for the future.

[1] Pat Springle, Equipping Parents to be Spiritual Champions in Their Homes, How Three Churches are Helping Parents Become Spiritual Leaders (Leadership Network 2010)

III. Why Should I Accept this Responsibility? The Bibles Tells us so.

Deuteronomy 6:1-9.

Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the ordinances—that the LORD your God charged me to teach you to observe in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy, [2] so that you and your children and your children's children may fear the LORD your God all the days of your life, and keep all his decrees and his commandments that I am commanding you, so that your days may be long. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe them diligently, so that it may go well with you, and so that you may multiply greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has promised you. Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Supporting Scriptures:

- Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it. (Proverbs 22:6)
- Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death. (Proverbs 23:13-14)
- Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him. (Psalm 127:3)
- Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4)

IV. When Should I Engage in Biblical Parenting?

- On-going process that is specific for every child requiring daily guidance and prayer.

V. How Do I become Empowered or Authorized to engage in Biblical Parenting?

- *Knowledge is Power* –The more we know, the more we share. Intense study of the major textbook, the Bible, and persistent and/or frequent prayer is necessary. To share knowledge of Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of Faith, one must have a relationship with Him and a desire to live a life of faith by precepts and examples.

VI: Tools needed for this study:

- **Bible**
- **Copy of the book,** *Empowered Parents: Putting Faith First*
- **Notebook and Pen**
- **Willingness to participate and learn**

VI: Pre-Project Assessment

Faith Formation Pre-Project Survey

Closing Prayer/ A Parent

APPENDIX B

Empowerment Sessions Course Outline

EMPOWERING PARENTS TO BECOME SPIRITUAL LEADERS IN THE HOME TO RAISE CHILDREN OF FAITH

COURSE OUTLINE

MISSION STATEMENT

To encourage parents to become spiritual leaders in the home in order to facilitate effective faith development in the life of their families through the Study of God's Word.

Book: EMPOWERED PARENTS: PUTTING FAITH FIRST

Lori Wildenberg and Becky Danielson

Authors of this Book

Lori Widenberg and BeckyDanielsons are working mothers with several years of experience working with children and parents in school, church, and the home setting. Both are educators who believe that parenting is an unnatural process requiring children and parents work together and support each other in the faith formation process. This book give twelve godly characteristics need to nurture faith in the family. They believe that parents must have an understanding of God's Word while applying these principles to the family setting. The authors agree that empowerment comes when the families are unified in purpose, forgive pass mistakes, learn to listen and follow the rules that are established, pray for wisdom and spiritual discernment, and cling to the hope that comes with knowing Jesus Christ.

Course Schedule and Topics

There will be an orientation session, four empowerment sessions, and a closing session for parents with emphasis on the following chapters.

- Session One – Introduction and Chapter One
- Session Two – Chapters two, three and four
- Session Three – Chapters five, six, and seven
- Session Four- Chapters eight, nine, and ten
- Session Five – Chapters eleven and twelve
- Session Six – Final comments and exit interviews

Parents are to be ready for discussion prior to class meetings. Notes should be taken during the sessions and during study preparation time a home. The classes will be informal and should allow for open discussion. If there are personal issues that parents desire not to share with the class, please feel free to see the researcher before or after the session.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this process and I hope you will be blessed by the process.

APPENDIX C

PRE/POST SURVEYS

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
DOCTORAL PROJECT

Empowering Parents to Become Spiritual Leaders in the Home to Raise Children of Faith

Pre-Project Survey

From your perspective, how important is faith in raising children?

- o Extremely important
- o Very important
- o Slightly important
- o Good but not required
- o Not important at all

Rate your knowledge of faith as it relates to the Bible.

- o Very knowledgeable
- o Somewhat knowledgeable
- o Limited but learning
- o Do not understand it
- o None at all

How often do you engage in faith formation activities (such as personal devotion, Bible Study, Sunday School, Workshops, Worship etc).

- o Frequently
- o Occasionally
- o On Sunday's and Wednesday's only
- o When I think about it
- o Not as often as I should

How involved are you and your family in church?

- o Very involved
- o Slightly involved
- o Only when asked
- o When my schedule permits
- o Not at all

Do you (or did you) have family devotion and Bible Study at home?

- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Not as often as we should
- Sunday Morning Worship only
- Never

How comfortable are you with leading your family in faith formation activities such as devotion, teachings and/or Bible studies?

- Very Comfortable
- Slightly Comfortable
- Not Comfortable Yet but Learning
- Not at all

What do you hope these studies will do for you when it comes to leading your family in faith formation exercises?

_____

_____

_____

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
DOCTORAL PROJECT

Empowering Parents to Become Spiritual Leaders in the Home to Raise Children of Faith

Post-Project Survey

From your perspective, how important is faith in raising children?

- o Extremely important
- o Very important
- o Slightly important
- o Good but not required
- o Not important at all

Rate your knowledge of faith as it relates to the Bible.

- o Very knowledgeable
- o Somewhat knowledgeable
- o Limited but learning
- o Do not understand it
- o None at all

How often do you engage in faith formation activities (such as personal devotion, Bible Study, Sunday School, Workshops, Worship etc).

- o Frequently
- o Occasionally
- o On Sunday's and Wednesday's only
- o When I think about it
- o Not as often as I should

How involved are you and your family in church?

- o Very involved
- o Slightly involved
- o Only when asked
- o When my schedule permits
- o Not at all

Do you (or did you) have family devotion and Bible Study at home?

- o Frequently
- o Occasionally
- o Not as often as we should

- Sunday Morning Worship only
- Never

How comfortable are you with leading your family in faith formation activities such as devotion, teachings and/or Bible studies?

- Very Comfortable
- Slightly Comfortable
- Not Comfortable Yet but Learning
- Not at all

What do you hope these studies will do for you when it comes to leading your family in faith formation exercises?

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX D

Pre/Post Survey Table

	In this section, please rate the following statements:	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	Faith is very important in raising children.	1	2	3	4
2.	I am very knowledgeable about faith as it relates to the Bible.	1	2	3	4
3.	I engage in faith formation activities outside of Sunday morning and Bible study all of the time.	1	2	3	4
4.	My family is very involved in the ministry of the church?	1	2	3	4
5.	I do have family faith formation activities to include family devotion all of the time.	1	2	3	4
6.	I am very comfortable in leading my family in faith formation exercises.	1	2	3	4

APPENDIX E

Consent to Release Information Form

CONSENT TO RELEASE OF INFORMATION FORM

I voluntarily agree to participate in the research project sponsored by the Rev. Tressala Hicklin-Alsbrooks, as a requirement for completion of the Doctor of Ministry degree program offered by United Theological Seminary located in Trotwood, Ohio. I understand that the evaluation of our survey responses, class discussion, and related conversations will be kept strictly confidential and restricted to Rev. Hicklin-Alsbrooks to develop a tool for ministry and will be the basis of her doctoral dissertation.

I understand that the evaluation methods which may involve me are:

1. Recorded observations throughout the process,

2. My completion of evaluation questionnaire(s) and/or surveys,

3. My participation in an interview at the close of this process.

I grant permission for the evaluation data generated from the above methods to be published in the dissertation and possible future publication(s).

I understand that any identifiable information in regards to my name **will not** be listed this in the dissertation or any future publication(s). Each individual will be referenced by using a Greek alphabet.

_____ Research Participant

_____

Date

Assigned Designation Letter:_____

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